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"THE MAN WITH THE RED CLOAK."

THE
CLASH OF STEEL



BY
CARL REUTTI MASON

AUTHOR OF DEATH'S CONFESSION.

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Abbey Press

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PREFACE.

The historical novelist is indeed fortunate if in his searching through the musty pages of history he can find a character which conforms in every detail to the one his eye of imagination conceives. But as a general thing this is not the case and so one to fill this requisite must be furnished from the workings of his own mind; while the fundamental facts remain the same true and unchanged.

An historical novel is not the place to study details; but to fasten dates and events firmly in the mind, it is by far better than the dry pages of history. So as a word of warning to my readers, I desire to say that no faith should be placed in the characters of my main heroes, as they are merely brought into action to fill a space, from the novelist's point of view.

But the facts are the same. Grouchy did

not appear and no definite reasons have ever been given for his non-appearance at the battle of Waterloo, which undoubtedly caused Napoleon's defeat. For the historical data of this work I am especially indebted to Guizot's History of France, which is very much opposed to Napoleon, and Abbott's Life of Napoleon, which places Napoleon's actions in a very favorable light, and Muhlbach's Historical Novels, which give the sentimental part of the life of the great Emperor.

CARL H. MASON.

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THE CLASH OF STEEL.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

A FATAL MISTAKE.

Like the evening star, slowly mounting its zenith at the evening twilight, rose Napoleon's fortune, for awhile it set, sparkled and flashed, then slowly it began to pale behind the ominous clouds which long had been gathering on the horizon. The star of his greatness began its being when he married the widow of M. Beauharnais and turned back the horoscope of time so as to escape the laughter of his friends, I will not say the whole world, for at that time what a little noise the name of Napoleon Bona-

parte, Corsican, General, made, but rather of Napoleon Bonaparte himself. Stronger it became until the 30th day of November, 1809, when it set, sparkled awhile, then began fading off into a dying ember.

Fate long before had whispered into the sensitive ear of Josephine that when Napoleon should place the crown upon her head and whisper into her ear, "now Josephine you are Empress and I am Emperor of all France," that then had come the time for her to depart, for she felt that there could be no Emperor without an heir that should be a direct descendant of his blood. This she continually felt and often told the Emperor, who would try to allay her fears with some loving speech. But she knew and felt that he would sacrifice her at the altar of his ambition.

Up to this time there was no one whom the crown would fall back upon in case of Napoleon's death, unless it was Eugene, Napoleon's adopted son and Josephine's rightful child. But that would not suffice for the French people, Napoleon thought. Thus the poor woman saw that her fate was inevitable, to be banished, and she resigned herself to the

coming blow. There was but one way before she surrendered entirely but if that failed all would be lost. This last chance was to marry Hortense, Josephine's daughter and Napoleon's step daughter to Napoleon's brother Louis. After much trouble, anguish and planning this was at last accomplished and her efforts were crowned by Hortense giving birth to a son.

The old happiness returned, only to be changed into deeper despair, for the child died soon after. All to Josephine seemed lost and it was true, there was no doubt. She had recourse to no other plans and there was no longer a hope, there must be an heir to the throne which Napoleon had erected. Already the Emperor had consulted his councilors as to the move he was contemplating of divorcing Josephine.

Negotiations were begun with several royal families and an assembly was called to find a suitable Empress for the throne of France, which soon would be vacant. The assembly proposed several names but that of Maria Louisa of Austria was met with the most favor by the Emperor, thereby giving rise to much displeasure at several other courts. Napoleon combined diplomacy with necessity, as he would

have called it. He felt that it was necessary to rid himself of Josephine and in choosing another wife, he preferred to choose one who would bring aid to his cause.

At first the alliance with some Russian Princess seemed favorable and it was agreeable to Alexander but Napoleon preferred Austria, thinking thereby to gain a stronger power in his favor but he made one of the mistakes which cost him so dearly. Alexander's wrath was provoked and instead of gaining Austria's favor, it gained both Russia's and Austria's hatred. Now came the trying time. Napoleon called Hortense and requested of her that she inform her mother of the step he had been contemplating but she refused, saying "you may break her heart sire, but I shall not." Next he tried to have Eugene break the news to his mother but again he was met with a stern refusal.

It was on the evening of November 30th, 1809. All day long the cold wind had driven the withered leaves about the streets in the same manner as Fate drives our hopes. First fluttering awhile on the almost barren branches, then

they are torn from the stem and at last a whirlwind of disappointment hurls them into oblivion.

The rain had come and died at times from the low clouds which hung over the earth. Occasionally a flurry of snow and perhaps a patter of hail, then gloom again, gloom every where, thick and impregnable as that settled on the brow of the eternally mute sphinx as she looks over the burning barren sands, guarding with her shade the flights of caravans of centuries. A day which, when dying makes one feel as though the sun would never again mount his throne "in majestic state," as though the angels had forgotten "with fairy hands to shift the scenery of the heavens."

The occasional patter of horses hoofs, the rumble of a carriage, then silence as deep as that which hangs about the tomb or the chamber of the dead. A night fit for dreams of morality and deeds of violence. A night for sadness and languid melancholy, for charity and for murder, but then what is the difference between charity and murder, be it self murder or otherwise? They are often identical, often the same to some poor wretch laboring in poverty and dis-

tress or wallowing in wealth and dishonor. Yet he does not recognize the fact when the murderous blow descends that charity has been done. He does not feel that from a life of distress and pain he has been subpoenaed into a life of happiness or perhaps a life of silent, eternal sleep, anything better and nothing worse than the life he has led.

Thus oftentimes the pauper is charitable in his poverty; when he fells his victim and the victim of despair with the same blow, who hesitates to do for himself that which the pauper has done for him. Who hesitates and fears. What? He knows not and still he feels that nothing can be worse than the life he has led and yet he hesitates. Draws the poniard from its sheath, feels its temper, sees it glitter in the light, a moment of thought, the dagger slips unstained into its sheath again.

While the glitter of a stiletto, a sharp cry and all is over or still better a drop upon the lips, a dream of blissful happiness, perhaps the only he has known, the arms of his fairy mistress about him, the fever of her burning lips, the perfume of her hair as it hides his face, her hot breath upon the cheek—then the stiffening

of a muscle, the glassy stare of an eye, the rattle in the throat and then we know not but that he has happiness.

The world will say he was a coward, but he is not. Let them who are loudest in their accusations of cowardice contemplate the very act and ascertain who is the coward. Let them prick their living flesh with the needle point of a poniard and feel the self murderer's thoughts and fears; let them feel the touch of the clear cold liquid of death and know that soon all will be over and let them feel the sting of their own taunt; let them then determine who is the coward and who is the bravado.

In the salon of the Tuileries, sat the Emperor alone, his head reclining on his hand, his elbow on the arm of the chair. Some would picture him with tears coursing down his cheeks and a broken heart at the crushing duty he was about to perform for the welfare of France, as he thought, but I will not. Undoubtedly it caused him pain to contemplate the part he was about to play. Whom would it not cause pain? Into whose heart would it not strike remorse, but as for Napoleon being heart broken I doubt it. Let the soldier follow the war, the trades-

man his trade, the beggar his beggary and the ambitious his ambition. Napoleon had decided to follow his ambition and the time had come for him to act. He arose from the chair and as he paced the length of the room he murmured to himself awhile in an inaudible tone. No doubt morality was debating with evil, remorse with what he felt a duty. At last he straightened up as the servant called him for the evening meal and said in a voice stern and unfaltering, showing that his decision had been made "it is all over; tonight it must be consummated" and with a firm step, in which seemed to still lurk a bit of hesitancy, he left the room. No doubt remorse was still working in his mind.

He entered the salle a manger to partake of the evening meal and also to break the ties that bound him to Josephine. Just as he entered the room, the door opposite opened and Josephine came in followed by Hortense. Anguish was painfully depicted upon her face and with morose step she approached the table and seated herself at her accustomed place, which soon she would leave forever. Everything at this moment of her departure seemed dearer to her than ever before. Undoubtedly

Hortense had in some way given her an understanding of what was to happen as Josephine suppressed her tears with pain.

Not a word was spoken. Josephine read her fate in the Emperor's actions for his eyes would not meet hers and her bosom heaved with suppressed anguish. It was as if leading a victim to be sacrificed at the shrine of ambition. The wind moaned about the building and dashed gusts of rain against the window with a ghostly patter, as if weeping for the Empress in her distress.

Tears would well up in her eyes, but with an effort she would restrain them. The scenes of past happy days arose before her as in a dream. She saw again the time when Eugene received his father's sword from Napoleon's hand. She saw the Emperor return triumphant with victory. She saw again the time when he placed the crown upon her head; but then her happiness was ended. The silence was oppressive. A lackey dropped a cup and awoke Josephine from her dream. No one spoke a word and a far off clock struck the hour in a slow drawing tone like a knell. The meal was finished. The Emperor arose and dismissed

those about him and as Josephine started to leave, he said to her in a choked voice:

“Pray remain Josephine, I would speak with you.”

Hortense asked permission to remain, but Napoleon denied it and she withdrew with a parting glance at her mother. All had left. The Empress stood at the closed door with bowed head for a moment, then turned and cast her eyes now filling with tears towards the Emperor.

“My Josephine, my good Josephine, my life has been but one dream of happiness in your presence. Your words have been my consolation, your kisses have changed moments of hell into eternities of heaven. All I owe to you. All my greatness I attribute to you and it pierces my heart and soul with pain to tell you—”

“Sire,” she said with tears and sobs choking her voice, “you need go no further. I understand it all; I understand it all. Those happy days are past and gone never to return. Was I not right Sire, when I asked you not to become Emperor?”

He approached and held her in his arms.

The tears were pouring from her eyes like the stream of an unchecked fountain.

"Ah Sire, it breaks my heart to think that I must leave you, that never again shall I feel your arms about me or your kisses on my lips, that you shall never again press me to your heart, no more will Josephine be your wife. No more, no more," and she fainted sobbing violently in his arms. He gently laid her on the couch and called a physician and knelt by her side until she was revived and then he left.

Then he retired to his own room and paced the floor until after midnight, when he threw himself upon the bed and fell into a troubled sleep. Suddenly he was awakened by the creaking of a door. He looked in wonderment as the servants never entered the room after he had retired, when Napoleon gave such orders and he had done so that night, as he wished to be alone with his own thoughts. Slowly the door opened and a figure in white, her hair disheveled, entered. It was Josephine. The scene was embarrassing. Had Josephine the divorced wife the right to enter the chamber of a man who was no longer her husband? The stillness was only broken by the sobbing which

escaped her. Napoleon was the first to speak: "Josephine?"

"My husband, my husband," she cried, "you are still my husband. Tonight, but tomorrow no more," and sobbing and weeping almost hysterical she threw her arms about his neck.

"Do not drive me away let me be with you if only your servant, your slave, anything, only let me be near you."

But the fate of Josephine had been signed and sealed. That was her last night as the wife of Napoleon and as the first rays of the morning light sped over France, the past Empress stole from her husband's bed-chamber as a mistress from that of her lover and France was without an Empress.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN THE RED CLOAK.

It was in a drinking inn on the outskirts of Paris, one cold dreary night where one could find idlers loitering, quarreling and arguing. There were merchantmen, groomsmen, common soldiers and officers who frequented these places almost constantly. They were divided off into separate groups, some arguing about their wares others drinking, some gambling, either with the dice or the cards but all swearing.

The French people forget easily. It was now the last of January and no one spoke of Josephine, she was not even thought of, the conjecture now was, "who would be the next Empress?" The secret had not yet been officially given out but it was almost certain that

Napoleon's suit had been accepted by Maria Louisa of Austria.

It was bitter stinging cold outside and a heavy snow was falling and it seemed from the amount of noise they made, that the revelers were trying to drown out the ghostly whistle of the wind as it would rush about the building. Glasses clinked as two or three cavalry-men would bump them together, wishing each other a safe campaign. The dice rattled as they rolled over the table, perhaps settling the fate of some fair demoiselle and the cards were shuffled, with hands that seemed to feel that they had dealt the wrong card to their opponent and the correct one to their master.

The laughter and noise grew louder and louder; but suddenly a silence, as deep as that which hangs about the tomb at "midnight's holiest hour," fell upon all the revelers. A man, had only opened and closed the door and stood shaking the snow from a great red cloak which almost entirely enveloped his fine form.

I say that a man, had only opened and closed the door, for why should only a man cause such a silence to fall on these half drunken idlers, who feared no one on this side of the grave or

the other but God and the devil himself. This thought presented itself to every mind but could not be explained. There seemed to be such graceful and serpentine movements about this man, that he seemed rather to glide than to walk.

He was dressed in the garb of a cavalier, entirely in keeping with the style of France, with the exception of this long red cloak, on account of which he was immediately styled by the crowd as the "man in the red cloak."

He strode across the room and the spurs on his high military boots seemed to vie in clearness of sound with that made by the long slender sword, which dangled loosely at his side. His face was shaded by a pair of mustaches and a beard, which ran to a point almost as sharp as that of his weapon. His hair and beard were black and his eyes were almost of the same shade, piercing as steel, glittering with a malicious, half sneaking half bold light, and restless as the needle of a compass, they would wander from object to object. A half sneering smile almost constantly played about his mouth and truly I do not doubt, that could the thoughts of this crowd have been compared, this one

would have been present in every mind; "how much like Goethe's creation of Mephisto."

The man seated himself quietly at a vacant table and ordered a hot punch. The revelers seemed to lose the spirit which they formerly had, for some reason or other; they could not explain. This calm, deliberate character cast a chill over their feelings and dampened their ardor. He seemed to be a gloomy forebodance of evil and misfortune. The drink was brought and placed before the man, who gave the landlord a coin which several times covered the price of the drink and when handed the change, merely made a motion with his hand as if to say "I require nothing more," began slowly to sip the beverage and the landlord, not having to be asked twice to keep the change, pocketed it and resumed his station.

This action seemed to give new life to the revelers and again the glasses sounded, but louder than before, again the dice clattered as they rolled on the table and the cards were dealt with a still more certain hand and the noise grew louder than ever. The man sat and sipped his drink and when it was finished he calmly drew a gold case from his pocket and

slowly and deliberately rolled a cigarette, lit it and blew the smoke into pale blue rings about his head while he mused.

"I am now on the right road to Paris and must begin my work by praising their idol and shouting in a loud voice, 'vive L' Empereur.'"

During this time, the crowd did not lose the opportunity of remarking, that evidently the new-comer must not be very well acquainted in that part of Paris and there were few—and they were too full for utterance—who did not make some jeering remark about the stranger. These sallies of insults were principally led by a half drunken bully, who would, between his throws of dice, heap some new insult on the stranger.

"I wonder if he plays and fights as well as he looks?" he asked in an undertone, but loud enough for the stranger to hear. The crowd laughed and cast sly glances in the direction of the object of their raillery.

The man calmly blew rings of cigarette smoke in the air and acted as though he heard nothing.

"Certainly he must be a shade returned from the time of the great Richelieu, to wear a cloak of such a color;" said he as he raked in the

last son of his fourth victim and clamored loudly for some one else to match his luck with him, but all feared to venture.

The stranger suddenly arose and strode across the room to where the bully was standing, calling for some one to compete with him, hoping that the stranger would hear and try his luck. The stranger picked up the dice and threw.

"By what name may we style you, my dear sir?" asked the bully with mock politeness, of which the stranger seemed to take no notice whatever.

"Call me Mario."

"My name is Pierre, Corporal Moran of Napoleon's Guard and styled its best swordsman, may it please you." Pierre picked up the dice laughing at the throw which Mario had made and threw them upon the table and lost.

"Come, double the amount," cried he.

"Done" said Mario and the crowd gathered nearer to watch the game, as already the stakes were higher than usual. They threw again and Mario won once more. Once after that he won and the crowd began to make remarks about Pierre's luck. But the tide turned and Pierre soon had all of Mario's money and was turning

away rejoicing when Mario called to him "come I still have this ring left, it is certainly worth 600 francs we will play on, not with the dice but with the cards."

Pierre flushed with victory and longingly eyeing the diamond, which sparkled and glittered on Mario's finger, consented to play. Luck favored Pierre and Mario was down to his last part of the diamond.

"Your remaining amount against twice mine," said Pierre anxious to close the game.

"I am willing," was the answer.

Mario took the cards and dealt. Pierre lost. A smile spread over Mario's features. The game went on and Pierre continued to lose until he was down to his last coin when Mario said: "it is but just I will wager all I have won from you against your last coin."

"I certainly am willing."

It was Mario's deal. How gracefully he shuffled. It seemed as if his dancing sharp eyes could read the face of every card through its back. It was played and Pierre lost.

"Here," said Mario pushing all that he had won from him; "take your money I have no need of it."

Pierre's dignity was offended and he flushed red with anger.

"Stranger, Pierre has never asked mercy of an enemy."

"This mercy is given without its being asked and besides, I am no enemy, for I will venture another hundred that I can shout *vive L'Empereur* *vive La France* as loud as the next one," and he coolly lit another cigarette.

Seeing that their leader was enraged the crowd gathered around the two and began to murmur that the stranger had half answered Pierre's taunt. He had proven that he could play as well as he looked, now perhaps he could fight as well.

"You have wounded my pride and not alone that, I could forget it, but strangers should preserve their skill at cheating to play upon their friends who trust them and would not have noticed it."

"You say I have cheated?"

"You turned a card, it may have been accident, but perhaps it was not; I think it was not."

There was a shower of sparks. Mario's cigarette had hit Pierre square in the face as a challenge.

"Another insult," he bellowed, "now there can be but one way to repair the wrongs you have done me."

"At your service" coolly responded Mario."

"When do you wish to cross swords?"

"There is no time like the present;" said the stranger, his eyes snapping with their steely glitter.

And so they left to fight, while the landlord cleared the table.

The snow was still falling and a cold stinging wind rushed through the barren trees. In that part of Paris there was no trouble to find a vacant lot and there was no need of fear of the gendarmes interfering. The formality of choosing seconds was done away with, the whole crowd being witnesses to the fight. Pierre was confident of victory and so were his companions who had so often seen him prove himself a master of the art, for such a long list of casualties were to his credit. When they reached the place where they intended to hold the bout, Pierre drew his sword and turned to Mario.

"Monsieur if you are slain what shall we do with your body?"

The sneer on Mario's lips widened into a leering smile as he said:

"Bury me here," and he pointed with his sword to the spot whereon he stood.

"And to whom shall we deliver the sorrowful news of your demise?" continued Pierre.

"Write it on the snow with the point of your sword in my blood and when the spring sun erases it, think then that often in the same manner are we blotted from the hearts of those we love," and he calmly placed himself on guard.

Pierre was a member of Napoleon's famous guard and was considered its best swordsman. He fought well; but Mario fought better. The snow would creak beneath their feet as they would lunge and retreat. It soon became evident that Mario was only playing with his opponent as a cat does with a mouse before it strikes its final blow. The same half sneer played about his lips and his graceful movements gave him the agility of a serpent. Finally he asked: "think you now that you will write Mario in blood on the snow?" Pierre was breathing too hard to make reply.

Nearer and nearer Mario's thrusts would

come and Pierre seemed unable to ward them off. Despair was plainly shown on his face and he was fighting viciously, thrusting at random and rushing like a maddened bull, but Mario would gracefully step aside and Pierre's sword always found nothing but vacancy. The crowd grew anxious, closed around the combatants, and many placed their hands on the hilts of their swords. Now Mario's sword brought blood on the arm. Now it touched the neck, now it struck forward with force over Pierre's guard and buried itself in his shoulder and, exhausted, Pierre sank to the ground bleeding furiously.

There were shouts, curses, cries and the rasping of swords as they slid from their sheaths. They all rushed forward to murder Mario and to help Pierre. In the confusion the lights were extinguished and blows were given, but all seemed to reach nothing. Finally a torch was relighted and raised in the air.

Mario had disappeared. He could not be found. The surprise forced the crowd into silence and they stood looking at each other in wonderment, for every one felt that he had struck in time to stop him forever.

As they stood there in amazement, they heard

the sound of a horse as it slowly cantered by, they saw the flutter of a red cloak and a mocking laugh fell on their ears.

"You will hear more of Mario," cried the rider as he spurred his horse onward.

It was a sorry looking crowd that carried poor Pierre back to the inn and wild were the conjectures of who Mario might be. Some thought him to be a spy for the king, others a nobleman entering Paris but all concluded that he was mysterious, daring and brave and all recalled their feelings when he had entered the inn.

CHAPTER II.

ACCEPTED.

The afternoon's sun was dying fast in the west as a figure strode slowly up the street, glancing from door to door at every house, but none seemed to be the one he was looking for, as he passed onward after each stop. Suddenly he halted and said half aloud to himself; "it is here that I am to meet her I am sure. This is the street and the house answers the description. Now for the signal;" and he gave three sharp trills. He waited for a few moments and slowly the door swung open and a figure in black glided across the threshold. The door closed again very quietly, and during the whole operation there was not the slightest disturbance.

At the foot of the stone steps, which led to the house the figure stopped and repeated the three trills. The man was about to advance and address the figure, when she, for it was a woman,

said in a low voice: "follow me. Do not act as if you know me" and she started down the street with the man following closely at her heels. After she had crossed several streets she suddenly came to a halt and waited for the man to come nearer.

"It is indeed you Mario; I had almost come to the conclusion that you were not coming. You are a little late."

"Yes I had a quarrel with a bully on my way from Chateau de Nuit as I entered Paris."

"It is needless to ask who won, for you are here."

"Yes on business. What is the news?"

The duke and the king are willing to give you an audience tonight, therefore this precaution. So you have just come in time as the duke who is here, in disguise of course, is soon to join his forces and the king is going from Paris, where I do not know."

"Well let us proceed at once," said the man anxiously.

"We still have a few minutes yet before the appointed time and now Mario tell me why you have given up your former life to become a spy in the hands of a dethroned sovereign?"

"I may tell you that later on."

"Was it to be with me?" she asked hoping the answer would be in the affirmative.

"Perhaps" was the cold response.

"I do not wholly believe that is the cause but think it more a plan for revenge.

The man's face underwent a change, the half sneer about his lips played off into hard-set lines. His eyes flashed and he spoke but the few words, "speak not of the past," but they were enough as they were said in such a tone that they were all that was necessary. The woman saw the change and in a soft voice began, "you know Mario, that I have always loved you. Yes I have loved you dearer than anything, even dearer than life and yet you have not spoken one word of love to me, not one action of yours has told me that you cared for me and I believe that you love or did love another. Forgive my hasty speech, it was my jealousy that forced me to say what I did."

The man did not like the confession and entreaty for undoubtedly there was some truth in them.

"Come;" said he, "take me to the king."

"Sh!" exclaimed the woman, "do not speak

so loud about the king. He may be discovered and all would be lost. Now be perfectly quiet and follow me," and she moved off in a slow walk, glancing from right to left to see that she was not watched.

Instead of returning by the way she had come she wound around corners that seemed to lead in a directly opposite direction from the house she had left. Suddenly she stopped on a corner and waited for the man to come.

"Now" said she when he had arrived "come with me and be quiet. I shall do most of the talking."

She then advanced to the third house from the corner and gave the three trills. A few seconds later they were answered from within the house and the door slowly opened.

"Follow me" she whispered then turning to a shadow, which stood behind the door, she said:

"Francois, let him enter, by order of the King."

The man did not answer, but the rasping of steel showed that he had understood the counter-sign and had obeyed by replacing his sword in its scabbard. The room was dark and it was some time before their eyes became accustomed

to the gloom. The woman stretched out her hand and took Mario's and started to walk. He followed her and passed through a long room, then suddenly she stopped, for a strong door barred their way. She rapped three times and the door slowly swung open and as they passed through she said: "descend my lor—" The man pressed her hand and the word she would have spoken died on her lips. They then descended a long flight of stairs, which made not the slightest noise beneath their feet and at the bottom of which burned a dim sickly light. When they had descended he could feel the coolness of stones beneath his feet and the dampness of walls around him.

Mario saw nothing, but he heard his guide in a low voice say: "By order of the King" and again a sword slid into its sheath. Then she led him through a tunnel just wide enough for them to walk side by side, which seemed to Mario to have no end. They wound around corners and often at these places there were intersecting passage ways, leading in opposite directions, but the guide pressed onward. Every now and then a rumble would be heard over their heads like the muttering of an

approaching storm. It was the rolling of wagons on the streets above. After some time his guide again gave the password and they ascended a short flight of stairs and entered into a room handsomely furnished but dimly lighted. "Wait here" she said, "and I will see if the King is ready to admit you."

She left the man standing before the fire, beating his high boots with his long gloves from which he had withdrawn his hands. He was tall and well built and although he tried to disguise his features by his beard, the lines still showed to a keen observer that he did not possess the face of a Frenchman. He spoke French fluently, but every now and then an accent would slip into his speech which showed, that his tongue fain would wander in another direction. After a few moments the woman returned and told him that the King was ready to receive him, "but," said she in a word of warning, "be firm he suspects that France is not your native country and that you are not risking yourself for that alone."

The man made no reply but thought that the woman made this statement, merely to gain information for herself. She then led him into

another room. It was now almost dark and by the light of a candelabrum on a table almost covered with papers, he saw a man writing, while another paced the length of the room in a dreamy mood. They were evidently expecting the visit for they were not disturbed in the least by the entrance of the two.

Mario was just wondering how the King would trust himself in the heart of Paris with so few guards about his person. At this moment the King arose and drew aside the curtains of the window and in a stern voice said: "Deliver these orders to François" and a hand reached forth and received the papers and the curtains were again drawn to.

Napoleon would have given a fortune to have known that the King was in Paris and he would have given another, greater than the first, to have bribed one of the guards to remove him; but the King was supposed to be in exile and so the Emperor did not know that he was right within his grasp, could he but remove the cover. The King turned to Mario.

"I understand that you desire to place yourself at our service."

"You have been correctly informed your Majesty."

"But now the cause of this risk?"

"France, my King and—," was the answer but the last word was not spoken but the word revenge trembled on his lips but was unheard.

"And what?" asked the King.

"And their liberty."

"Your answers falter."

"My deeds shall not."

"Your tongue at times seems to falter as though it was traveling uncertain paths, when you pronounce some words."

"I have been traveling much of late your Majesty."

"Well it is true a Frenchman is always a Frenchman no matter where he is. Is it not so my Lor—?"

"Mario is my name," was the cool response to the King's speech, which showed that suspicion lurked in his mind as to the kind of man he dealt with."

"But how am I to know that you are not a spy in Napoleon's hands?"

"My acts shall speak and prove all that."

"Do you not know that if you are caught by Napoleon, that it would mean certain death?"

"I should then die for a good cause your Majesty."

"Well now to do away with idle words; how do you intend to operate?"

"I have men and means. You shall have all news of any importance. It shall be conveyed to you through your faithful servants François and Lilly. My chateau shall be my headquarters but of course I will not be known as Mario there."

"And the name of your chateau."

"Chateau de Nuit."

"A peculiar name, where is it located?"

"On the boundaries of France, Belgium and Germany."

The King began to move restlessly in his chair and the color came and went in his face, evidently anxiety was on his mind.

"It is a large stone building?"

"Yes Sire."

"With stone lions holding shields with the Fleurs de Lis on them?"

"The same your Majesty."

"Sacre, my private chateau, if he should discover the secret" murmured the King under

his breath his hand fumbling with the pen he held. "I must contrive to get it out of there" he murmured.

Mario noticed the King's anxiety, but played his part by seemingly seeing nothing, though in reality he was observing the King's every action and it set his mind working, trying to interpret this demeanor.

"How long have you occupied this chateau?" asked the King.

Probably a month."

"It is a very mysterious place is it not?"

"Very, but how comes your Majesty to know of the place?"

"By hearsay, purely by hearsay, for a King must know everything that is in his domain."

"If his Majesty should accept me, anything he should command would be done."

"Then the only command I could give a spy is do your duty."

"Then you accept me?"

"Yes, providing you do not command too high a price for your services."

"I ask nothing."

"What do you expect."

"Nothing."

"Good, that is well, you are accepted. Let your deeds speak well against Napoleon."

"Have no fears your Majesty, they will."

"You are dismissed," and the King began to write at the table and Mario left with his guide. As he was about to turn away, the woman stopped him.

"Where to now Mario?"

"To Chateau de Nuit to make preparations, my men are there," and he strode off. The woman followed him with her eyes and mused: "No; he is not spy for King or France, he is spy for Mario and Mario alone," and she disappeared into the house.

In the room the King was still writing and the Duke was pacing the floor. The King laid down his pen and stared into vacancy. A fear was creeping over his mind. Had Fate prompted that strange being he had just met, to place himself in his service and also to buy his private chateau, the owner of which only the valet of the King had known and this servant was dead, so the secret remained only in his hands. Would not this man now turn to be a double edged weapon if he should discover the hiding place of the secret and if used too harshly

would rebound and cause its user more harm, than good? It was too late to retract the step he had now taken, for Mario was already in possession of the chateau and it was better for the King to have him as friend, than even neutral. The only thing to do was trust to luck or to remove the greater part of the secret.

Suddenly the Duke interrupted his musings: "What do you think of the man."

"In what way" asked the King.

"As a spy."

"Good."

"Why?"

"In the first place he is not a Frenchman."

"Why, how do you know that?"

"His tongue falters, his beard is too sharp and Frenchmen do not wear cloaks like his."

"What makes you think he will be good in our service?"

"He is forced on by more than love of King or country."

"What makes you think that?"

"Did you not notice the continual sneer about his lips, did you not see that he did not care to speak about the past and did you not notice him

correct me when I was going to call him by a title."

"Yes, now I do recall it. What do you think is his motive, or what is it that forces him to become a spy in our hands?"

"Revenge."

"Revenge?"

"Yes a man does not sneer, nor answer the way he did unless there is something more than the object to serve King or country hidden in his heart. He is no common man. There is a motive in all this and it is revenge."

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER AP-
PEARS IN PARIS.

Strangers, who for more than five years had passed up a certain street in Paris, which I need not name, would stop in front of a building blackened by neglect and age and would wonder that such a place should be allowed to fall in ruin. On inquiring what house it was they would be told that it was called the "Alhambra" probably because it was deserted, or perhaps because before it was abandoned, it had been inhabited by a Moor of royal blood who had come from his home in sunny Spain to rest and enjoy the frivolity of the French nation. Its doors were closed and bolted. Its shutters were fastened by their hooks and re-enforced by bars and bolts. The old gate, bearing the strange design of the Moor's coat of arms was rusting on its hinges, barring an entrance to the court

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yard, as firm as that of a mausoleum. Weeds had grown up in the cracks of the massive stones and floor of the court yard, which long had ceased to echo to human foot-steps.

The "Alhambra" was indeed an appropriate name for this place of Moorish desertion. From the court ran a pair of wide stairs of probably twelve or fifteen steps and then a huge arch, the key stone bearing the curious armorial of its past lord, then a sort of alcove or porch with an arch to the west, then another arch over the entrance of two large doors of carved oak. Through these portals no one had passed for more than five years, since the day of the Moor's untimely death, which stirred all Paris into a state of excitement.

When the corpse was borne from the house, the old brown faced, white haired butler was seen to close the door, not without one lingering look of sadness and regret. Then he produced a massive key and the bolt turned without a change being made on the interior of the building. Then he tottered away, possibly returning to the land of his birth, probably not, no one knew. But since then no one had placed a foot within the court yard, much less the

building which stood silent, stern, a monument for its deceased Lord. Year came and year went. Time and the elements joined hands every day in tinting the stone building, with its beautiful carvings, a somber hue, as if it at last had realized its loss and were now assuming its mourning garb.

The Moor's history, if not found in the archives of the nation, was for a day, or probably a month, for the world forgets soon and the French nation much sooner, written in the minds of the people. The first that was known of him was his building of the mansion we have been speaking of, then his entering it with his strange retinue. Then his appearance at the opera and the showering of a necklace of diamonds and gems of priceless value at the feet of the prima donna, because she sang a song of his native land with such grace and fervor. Next came the rumor of his liaison with the most noted grisette and mistress of the times. Silks, gowns almost beyond price, jewels, fortunes were heaped upon her in profusion. Nothing was made secret. Like husband and wife they lived at the "Alhambra." To make a reception or a ball a success the Moor must

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be induced to grace the hall with his presence. Once he consented to be present, the word was given out and the ball-room was crowded to overflowing, but should he decline the invitation the hall was deserted. Theaters were crowded to excess, when it was known that he had a box and managers were not tardy in announcing that fact when it was true.

Now this strange character had in his retinue a servant who accompanied him almost constantly when in public and acted as a kind of interpreter and manager. Tall, straight and handsome with his olive skin and black hair and eyes which expressed as much as his lips spoke, quiet, but sharp and shrewd, he had no match as a valet and companion.

A year had passed since the Moor's entrance into Paris, when one morning, the old gray haired butler came before his master and in his strange and mysterious way made it clear to his Lord, without offending him, that it was to his advantage to watch his mistress and his servant.

The Moor laid a trap and giving out that he should be gone for a night, he kindly dismissed the valet, as he wished to go unattended. The

servant fearing a plot, as it was an unusual occurrence for the Lord to go into public without his company, mounted a horse and followed the brougham which bore his Lord. The Moor knowing the shrewdness of his servant and seeing the horse following his carriage, ordered the coachman to drive to the Tuileries. This threw the young man off his guard, as he thought he was going to visit the King and wished to see him in secret. So he returned.

About midnight the Moor also returned and quietly entered the house and peering through the curtains of his mistress' room he found her in the arms of her lover. For a moment he gazed, then his passion got the best of him and he thrust the curtains aside. The woman shrieked, but the young Moor was calm and quiet. On the wall, were hung many strange moorish weapons as ornaments. The lord grasped a scimitar and rushed upon the youth who had stolen the affections of his mistress. As he struck the young man swerved to one side and the blow which otherwise would have split his skull, crashed into his shoulder and dyed his gown with his blood. Then they drew closer and a hand to hand struggle ensued; but

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the loss of blood began to tell on the youth for each moment he was growing weaker.

A long curved dagger hung at his side, but it was on the side which was unhurt and in such a position that he could not reach it. Suddenly the woman recovering from her fear and realizing the result if the youth should fail to strangle the lord, stole to his side and drew the long glittering blade from its sheath and pressed the handle in the youth's hand, who grasped it tremblingly for life was fast ebbing from him. With his last effort, he raised it and plunged its curved blade in his old master's breast. Then both sank to the floor with the life gone from one and fast ebbing from the other. Then the woman fled from the house and disappeared. No one knew where.

Then came a lapse of many years during which the building stood lonely and silent. The old butler had never appeared, but some believed he would. Strange to say the mistress had been the only person, who was not a Moor, who had seen the interior decorations and embellishments of this strange mansion. No one except her had gone farther than the door and it must have caused much talk and

wonder when, one day the doors were seen to open and a man, handsomely dressed, come out. He must have come during the night for no one saw him enter. The shutters were being opened and cleaned. The old lock on the gate had been turned and allowed the gates to part and swing back on their rusty hinges. The oak door was being polished the windows cleaned and everything was being thoroughly renovated. After awhile, the man returned in his carriage, drawn by a pair of beautiful black horses and embellished with a coat of arms on its doors. The coachman who assisted the man was dressed in full livery and at the door he was met by a valet, dressed as many a courtier wished to be. After taking a scrutinizing glance at the building, the man entered the house followed by his valet.

The tongues of the neighborhood were set wagging. Everybody spoke about the new occupant of the "Alhambra" and guessed who he might be. His carriage bore an armorial, strange indeed, but it sufficed, he was of some nobility. His form was good, his face handsome and his eyes bright and sharp, his hair and beard black. This the women noticed. His

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horses were good, his carriage of the latest style, his dress up-to-date, his demeanor cold and haughty, even to indifference. This the men noticed. But no one could come to a conclusion as to who he was and from whence he came.

"Would he come to the opera that night?" the women wondered.

"Would he play at Madame Stilsits?" the men hoped.

All day long the "Alhambra" was being placed in a proper state for its new master, but strange to say, not a bit of new furniture was brought to the house. All day long carriages passed by to see the changes and even Napoleon himself would have passed, had not etiquette placed a restraint on rulers, for so strange a thing was it to see that building, which had stood vacant for so many years, now occupied that it seemed almost a miracle. Then again, it brought back recollections of the Moor and his murder and assassination.

Two days passed and the stranger of the "Alhambra" did not appear either at the opera or at Madame Stilsits; but on the third night there was a vacant box at the theater. All eyes were directed towards it hoping, that the

stranger might appear. Bets were even made that he would. The manager being asked if he would come said that he did not know, but that a servant in livery had bought the box for the season and he could not tell whom it was for.

The curtain was falling on the conclusion of the first act and no one had entered the box. The audience was impatient to see the owner, but he did not come. The curtain arose for the next act and for an instant there was darkness in the hall, necessitated to form some stage effect. When the eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, they were turned towards the box. It was occupied. A man sat calmly gazing at the stage. A general murmur of, "there he is," arose in the hall to the annoyance of the actors. A valet stood at the door of the box as if he had been there all evening. At the conclusion of the second act and the hall was again in a blaze; every one gazed at the occupant of the box, where the stranger sat gazing about him, as if nothing unusual were occurring. Every one desired to visit him; but no one knew him.

It happened that Madame de Ebersville and a crowd occupied a box near that of the stranger. "Ah" thought she "I have a plan to gain a

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visit from the stranger." She leaned forward, as if intensely studying some face across the hall, then as if not noticing what she were doing, she let her kerchief fall, directly into the stranger's box. She could not resist the temptation to look if it had fallen in the right place. The crowd seeing her act cheered. The stranger picked up the kerchief, handed it to his valet with a card and again turned to the orchestra.

The valet presented himself at the door of Madame de Ebersville's box and handed her the kerchief with a bow. The hall was in an uproar of laughter for they knew that all this had been done to gain a visit from the stranger. The valet handed her the kerchief and card saying, "My lord desires a visit tomorrow."

Although she had not gained what she desired, she had received something just as good, for now it would be through her that he would be introduced into society. Thus musing she read the card she held in her hand; "Prince de Tristesse."

In showing the card to the other occupants of the box, she held it high enough for the audience to see. The laughter subsided.

"Prince of Sadness" what a strange name she murmured as she handed the card to her husband an elderly man while she was still young.

"You are not going to take advantage of this are you?" he asked.

"Why not," she replied? "It will now be through me that he will be introduced into society. Do you think that I would lose this opportunity? It would be foolish if I did so. You will go with me will you not Eugenie" she asked turning towards a young lady who sat in the rear of the box.

"If I should not be intruding Madame I would be pleased to accompany you" she answered in a soft sweet voice.

CHAPTER IV.

MADAME'S VISIT.

The next afternoon, the carriage of Madame de Ebersville drove up in front of the "Alhambra" and Madame and her companion Eugenie alighted and mounted the steps. Hardly had they reached the alcove, when the door noiselessly swung back and a valet ushered them into a parlor, exquisitely decorated with Moorish draperies and hangings. On the floor of flesh colored, rose marble were heavy rugs into which their feet sunk up to the ankles.

Rich draperies of gold and purple cloths hung from the great arch above the doors, which gave a pleasing contrast to the almost barren pink colored marble walls. Here and there hung massive paintings of warm landscape, scenes of sunny Spain. In corners stood life size statues of nymphs and cupids, carved from the same material as the floor and walls and the rosy tints

of the figures and their beautifully molded forms, gave them almost a life like appearance.

The high spacious ceilings were embellished with figures in exquisite mosaic work. From the four corners of the ceiling of the room, hung the half body of a nude figure, holding in her outstretched hands a lamp, which when lit shed a light of wonderful brilliancy throughout the room. From a distance, somewhere, they could hear the musical ripple and drip of a fountain.

Madame de Ebersville nodded to her companion. "Is it not wonderful, I should like to see more," she said. Just then the curtains drew apart and the stranger at the opera, of the night before, stood in the door-way. "Ah Madame, pardon the delay and you Mandamoiselle also." Madame was wondering how he knew by what titles to call them and as a venture to open the conversation began:

"It is we who are to be pardoned prince, for this is very embarrassing to you, my name is—

"Madame Andreas de Ebersville," interrupted the prince.

"Now that you know me, allow me to introduce my friend Madamoiselle—

"Eugenie de Veres, daughter of Baron de Veres."

"Correct, but how came you to know us."

"That is my business, in fact the affair of every gentleman who expects a visit in order not to create embarrassment. But pray be seated. It is indeed to the lucky mishap of the kerchief that I owe this visit."

"It was very distressing to me."

"Then, but I hope not now. Mademoiselle is admiring my paintings."

"Yes, they are beautiful; such coloring and such grace are seldom seen."

"Yes; the names are on the pictures; but I do not know them they are by foreign artists. I should have thought that Madame and you Mademoiselle Eugenie would have seen them before.

"Prince, you are not acquainted with the history of the 'Alhambra' or you would not speak that way" interposed the elder lady, "no one excepting one has ever placed himself in this house who was not a Moor."

"Ah that is true? I did not know that. So the place was hidden from mortal eyes. Well it is very strange."

"But Monsieur should have known the history of this house before he bought it."

"I did not buy it. But as to the Moor's history, I am thoroughly acquainted with it."

Madame de Ebersville was in torture to know how the "Alhambra" had come into his possession if he had not bought it, but felt that it would be too rude to ask. Perhaps if she should lead the way he would tell of his own accord.

"Well if the pleasure of seeing the interior of this house has been denied you I shall not be like the Moor. I shall conduct you around and be pleased to show you through its mysteries and its surprises."

The prince arose and his companions did likewise and holding the curtains apart he led them into a sort of hall-way, which divided the building into two parts and led them into what appeared to be a kind of conservatory, for in the distance they could see the green of luxurious vegetation. The hall was of pure red granite, walls, floor, ceiling and all and at every door hung heavy maroon draperies, bordered and adorned with gold. Directly in front of them was a large arched doorway, protected by no curtains and through this they could see the silvery

spray of the fountain as it rose and fell into the great basin. Nymphs, holding jars in their hands, were scattering sprays over the beautiful large pond lilies floating in the bowl, while a colossal statue of Neptune, waving his hand to myriads of life size mermaids, sent a cooling refreshment to their armsful of blood red roses. On all sides were blossoms emitting delightful fragrance. Here, a huge banana tree raised its head towards the glass roof as if to be the first to reach the rays of the sun; there a modest patch of violets bloomed and perfumed the air, narcissus, daisies, hibiscus, tulips, flowers from every country, clime and zone all mingled in a happy unison.

"Oh this is a regular paradise" cried Eugenie delighted with the scene before her.

Next, the prince led them into the dining hall, a spacious room in which not a bit of marble appeared, for all was of solid oak. A long table sat solidly with its lion carved feet upon a floor polished into the brilliancy and smoothness of a mirror. Heavy oaken chairs, to match the table with their soft morocco seats and backs, were dispersed throughout the room.

Directly back of the head of the table, ex-

tending out from the walls, were two massive heraldic lions grasping between them a large shield, now bearing the arms of the Prince of Sadness, instead of that of the Moor. All the panels of the walls were carved and inlaid with darker and lighter wood.

From here he led them into the library a room all of cherry, very plain, with cases of books and manuscripts, all bound in cherry colored leather, covering the extent of the walls from the floor to the ceiling. At one end of the room stood a large desk with papers scattered about in reckless profusion. They then left the library and the prince lifting the curtain, showed them into a hall equally as large as the conservatory, the floor of which was of mosaic work.

"This" said the prince "is the art hall of the "Alhambra."

The walls, up to half their height were perfectly plain polished marble, but from there on up they were one mass of carving, figure after figure, design after design, but none alike, ran the whole length of the walls and as they reached the ceiling became more complicated and beautiful. At last in the center, terminat-

ing into a large beautiful chandelier, hanging half way down from the great dome above by the arms of sylphs, dragons, nymphs, and satyrs in a profusion of a thousand lights. All through the hall stood statues and statuettes, some of every marble and granite found in the world. Here was a Venus de Milo, here a Diana, there a Venus and a Cupid. But in the center of the room stood the grandest of all.

"That," said the prince, "is known as the blind statue."

"Oh, it is beautiful, magnificent" cried both the women in one voice.

It was a group with the central figure that of a beautiful Greek slave girl, ready for the bath and her form was molded from the most beautiful flesh colored marble while near her, in splendid contrast, were two kneeling black waiting maids, shaped from the blackest of marble.

"All is perfect but the eyes of the bather," exclaimed Madame de Ebersville.

"That is partially why it is called the blind statue. The carver of this grand work, had almost finished his task, when one day while working with his chisel a piece of marble struck him in the eye. It totally disabled the one optic and

the other was so sensitive to the effect, that slowly it began to dim. The poor sculptor toiled day and night so as to finish before he should be totally blind. Not a moment's rest would he take. All was finished to the eyes of that beautiful figure when, his sight vanished and under the strain he died at the feet of the creation he had given every attribute of outward seeming, save the "window of the soul." If Madame will come soon again and you also Mademoiselle, I will be pleased to show you the rest of the house, but now we will withdraw to the parlor and be served and over the tea-cup I will tell you how I came to be the possessor of the "Alhambra."

They returned to the parlor and hardly had they entered when they were waited on by a servant in full livery.

"Oh do tell us how this paradise came into your possession."

"Well, it came about in this way. It is a strange tale. I was traveling in southern Spain and in an out of the way place, near Granada, I came upon an old gray-haired man lying on the ground. Thinking him asleep I passed by very lightly, in order not to disturb him. But some strange feeling possessed me and I returned

and saw that it was not a natural sleep that held him so still and that he had fainted. Placing my flask of liquor to his lips and forcing a few drops into his mouth, he after awhile opened his eyes and gazed about him. He thanked me with great vehemence and after he gained enough strength began a rambling conversation. Then he related to me how his master, a Moor of royal blood, had taken the idea into his head to go to some foreign land and build a palace and there live a life of luxury.

The poor old man was forced to go with him. Then he told of the tragedy and how after it was all over he had taken the keys, left the house just as it was and had wandered back without any funds, excepting what he had on his person and they were soon exhausted, for he would not touch anything in the polluted house. Then he told how at last he had reached the sunny shores of Spain to die in his native land and now that he was there, all was over, but to relieve himself of a burden and that was to rid himself of this place in France. Then he handed me a key from beneath his gown and told me the exact location of the "Alhambra" and said that whoever possessed the knowledge

of a secret hiding place, in the building, would then become possessor of the palace. As he was fast sinking and as no one, excepting the Moor and himself had known of the place, he told me of it."

"So you did not buy the palace?" said Madame de Ebersville.

"Yes Madame, I purchased it at the price of a decent burial."

"Prince, you are strange; you have told us nothing but sad tales" said Eugenie.

"Mademoiselle oftentimes circumstances and surroundings force us into moods of melancholy or happiness. But as the "Alhambra" seems to be a fated place and as you desired to know its history, probably that was conducive to the mood."

"As the prince has been so kind in showing us into the mysteries, which so few have seen, I feel it my duty to introduce him into society and at the court."

"Into society perhaps Madame, but not at court."

"Ah I thought the name you have was assumed."

"You have guessed correctly and if I should

go to court I would have to lay aside my pseudonym and that I do not wish to do."

"But nevertheless that will not prevent me introducing you at Madame Stilsits, who has many friends, who visit her daily. Gaming goes on the whole night through and all the latest news is there discussed and all gossip is brought to view."

"That will suit me greatly. As for playing I can play but little as Madame will see and as for gossip I talk little, but hear much; so it will please me any time."

"Let me see, this is Wednesday; will Friday suit?"

"With pleasure."

"So be it then. Come Eugenie, it is growing late. Au revoir prince, your name suits you."

"Au revoir Madame until Friday, and you Mademoiselle, will you be with us?"

"Yes I shall come too. Au revoir."

Madame de Ebersville and Eugenie entered the carriage and drove away.

"What a beautiful house" said Eugenie.

"Yes, and what a beautiful man."

"He is indeed strange, so obliging and still so cold and indifferent. He will make quite a stir

at Madame Stilsits, and to think that it is you who will introduce him; but may he not lose too much in her place there?"

"That is his own look out. He cannot blame me if he loses. I will have done my part but here we are" and they both alighted from the carriage at Madame de Ebersville's home.

CHAPTER V:

MADAME MAKES AN AGREEMENT.

The next evening the prince occupied his box at the opera and Madame and Eugenie occupied theirs also. Monsieur Le Baron de Ebersville was not present. The beauty of the "Alhambra" had reached many ears, of course through the channel which was only open and that was Madame de Ebersville, and every one sat gazing at the master of such a palace, which was finer than that of the Emperor. The curtain had fallen on the first act when Madame turned to Eugenie: "I should be pleased to receive the prince in our box and you Eugenie, would it please you?"

The color in Eugenie's face expressed her sentiments more eloquently than her meek "yes." Hardly had they spoken, when the door opened and the prince entered.

“Madame, I should hope that I am not intruding.”

“Not in the least; we are always pleased to see your Grace. But the play, does it suit your taste?”

“Very much so. I am delighted with your French renditions. Why so pensive Mademoiselle; are you in love or contemplating marriage? Love is but the prelude to marriage as the first act to a tragedy. Shun the prelude and the play will cease.”

“Why prince to hear you speak one should think that you have been disappointed in love?”

“Perhaps, Madame. But the bards of old and the bards of today have painted only the beautiful side of love. They have only pictured it as a pathway of beautiful flowers, emitting a pleasing perfume. The sky overhead in their dreams is pure ethereal blue, the sun shines bright and laughs on the lovers’ journey, as they wander hand in hand. But the romanciers and the tragedians’ pen, pictures it oftentimes in a truer light. Joy and pain follow closely on each others heels and fight a battle royal for supremacy. But as a general thing pain conquers and joy falls by the wayside. The path in the

romance and tragedy is often covered with thistles and thorns, then stretches of barren sand, the sky is dark and the sun is obscured by black ominous clouds; only now and then appears a ray of brightness through the rain drops of tears."

"Oh prince, the play has led you into this mood. You must cast it off even if it is becoming to you."

"My name Madame, signifies my disposition."

Eugenie was occupied gazing at the audience.

"But the Baron, why is he not here tonight Madame?" asked the prince in an undertone.

"He is ill."

"Seriously?"

"No, only a fit of indisposition caused by—"

"Reverses," he says.

"Prince you are indeed plain spoken. What do you mean?"

"Only that Monsieur le Baron has speculated and lost."

"But how came you to know?"

"There are oftentimes things which it is ones duty to know."

"But if this should get out? Prince I speak frankly with you, for I feel that I can trust you.

Monsieur le Baron has speculated. Last evening when I returned from your house I found him sitting alone in deep thought. I could see that something had occurred. He would not tell me at first, but after awhile he told me the exact state of affairs. He had speculated in silks and today had lost. This has not been his first reverse. Steadily his fortune turned against him, until hoping to gain back all, he staked everything today. He has lost. We are ruined, utterly ruined. Tomorrow a vast sum is due, if we get no renewal and the news of our loss gets noised around we shall be lost."

"Madame there is no poison for which there is not an antidote, nor an evil for which there is not a remedy. All is not lost."

"What do you mean? I cannot understand you."

"I mean this, Madame, that you will get a renewal tomorrow, only follow my dictates and answer my questions. Is the man to whom your husband is indebted in this house?"

"Yes in one of the boxes."

"That is good, all will be well."

"I do not understand."

"He will not hear of the failure this afternoon."

My presence in your box will make him feel secure and he would give much to make my acquaintance; is it not so?"

"It is, I spoke to some of his family today. But how did you know?"

"As to that I will not speak, but now to make things more secure I shall give to you a box, which when you see him looking directly at us and of course at some proper time in the play, you will throw it at the feet of the prima donna;" and with this from his pocket he took a pale blue plush box and handed it to her as he opened it.

"No no" cried Madame "I cannot think of it."

"But you must. Still the game is not yet played. Do not think you can never repay me for you can."

"No I could never repay you."

"Yes. You are in a favorable position at court."

"Yes."

"In fact the Empress is confidential to a certain extent."

"You are wonderful, you know everything."

"Not everything, there are still things I de-

sire to know and following Cicero's adage of: "whenever you desire to find out a secret go to the man's mistress;" in this case it is his wife. There are things I desire to know. In that way you can repay me."

"You are then a spy?"

"Perhaps."

"And you want me to be one also."

"Not necessarily."

"I cannot. It would be wrong."

"Madame, it is hard to lose one's position."

"But you give us only a temporary relief."

"I told you that the game was not yet finished. Tomorrow night we go to Madame Stilsits. I shall play and you shall play also."

"But if I lose."

"Madame will not lose. Come, now is the time."

"I cannot. I cannot."

"It is hard to fail. Now or all will be lost."

The prima donna had just finished a pretty love pleading. Madame de Ebersville arose in the box and all eyes were turned upon her. For a moment she paused as if hesitating, then she tossed the blue box at the feet of the prima donna. There was a burst of applause from the

audience. The die had been cast. A smile spread about the prince's lips as he whispered "well done, he was looking directly at you."

Then a breath of silence spread over the house as the prima donna stooped to pick up the box and opening it she drew forth a beautiful necklace of diamonds formed into three strands and terminating at the center into a beautiful cluster, which sparkled in the brilliant light with dazzling fire. Then she turned, after clasping the necklace about her neck and in her best effort sang the song again, facing the Madame's box. But Madame seemed not to hear it. Her face was as white as her dress and beads of perspiration were standing on her forehead.

"What an awful power had this man," she was wondering and the burst of applause from the audience at the conclusion of the song awoke her from her revery and she applauded with the rest.

All through the rest of the performance, Madame sat as in a dream. She then only realized the power of this man who had disguised himself as the Prince of Sadness and the contract she had entered upon, but then she calmed herself by the thought, that it was for the best.

The prince was conversing with Eugenie whose beaming face plainly showed the pleasure his attentions gave her. To Eugenie he gave the explanation, that he himself had intended to give the necklase to the prima donna but thought the latter course the best. Any explanation would have sufficed with Eugenie, for anything he might do was correct in her eyes.

At last the performance was concluded and the prince assisted them into their carriage and wishing them a safe journey, he turned away with a smile on his face.

"No Madame; the game is not yet played. It has just begun. Tomorrow night you will win and you are mine." Then he was driven to the "Alhambra" where he was met by his gray-headed valet.

"Gaston have everything in preparation to leave in a day or so. We shall soon leave Paris for awhile."

"Monsieur, a message for you," and the valet handed him a sealed letter which the prince hastily read.

"It is true; Napoleon is pushing on to Russia. Fleur de Lis."

Madame de Ebersville's carriage was whirling

over the pavements towards the home of Eugenie. Both the occupants sat in silence, in thought. Both debating, one with herself, the other with fortune. Madame saw only the prince's smile of victory, while Eugenie heard only his kind polished words. Madame knew that her husband would hear of her actions at the opera and knew that she would have to give an explanation. What should it be? Well she would tell him all. No, that would not do she was a spy and her husband in the good graces of Napoleon's favor. She would only tell him that it was the prince, who assisted her and instead of him giving the necklace to the actress as he had intended to do, he had given it to her, merely as an honor. She still had some money of her own left, if she lost that little, that would not amount to much, while on the other hand if she won, something might still be regained. Well at any rate the stake was large and she must meet it. Then either victory and the recovery of position or loss and failure. At any rate the game was begun and must be played to its end.

"Love is but the prelude to marriage as the first act to a tragedy. Shun the prelude and the

play will cease," was rumbling in Eugenie's ears. She heard it in the noise of the wheels and in the sigh of the wind. "Is he not right," she asked herself. "What is love but the ticket of the lottery of marriage. The prize great, the price at first small then at last greater until finally disastrous failure, if no winning is made? Love is but a game of chance and like all games it is fascinating. If once we lose, we play on to win back what we have lost. If we win a little at first, we play on to win more. The time to stop is at its beginning, but we rush on and chase the ignus fatus of success. Brother tramples on brother, friend strikes friend, neighbor battles with neighbor, in their mad rush like moths towards that flame of success. We say no and an inward voice says yes, so we battle with ourselves, the voices raise themselves in a clamorous deafening din, but in the midst of it all we rush on and some escape the blaze of love, others pass through it purged and successful, while the most fall and linger in the agony of despair." "No" said the thoughts of Eugenie. "Yes," said the inward voice, then began the battle and she rushed on, while the carriage stopped at the door of her home and she alighted.

"Tomorrow night?" asked Madame, aroused from her thoughts.

"Yes" answered Eugenie meekly, amidst the din of the inward battle. "Yes" thought she "I like the rest shall rush on and if I fall there are many before me who have done the same."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CARDINAL'S CAMEO.

Madame Stilsits' house, as referred to before, was the rendezvous of the upper class of aristocracy, where they would assemble and pass the time away at gaming and rioting. Many a scandal had its germ planted there and many the fortunes that had been lost and won over the tables. Duels, the outcome of scandal, were frequent, suicide had its share, but all would be so skillfully covered and concealed that seldom the outside world knew of them. Glasses would clink after the games were finished. Loser drank with winner, bankrupt with millionaire, the one perhaps moody, silent and melancholy, the other joyous, happy and content.

Princes, Barons, Dukes, men and women of rank assembled here and shuffled the pasteboards, played the colors, or rolled the dice and either won or lost. Generals, marshals, captains,

all frequented this place and gossip and rumor held high sway. No one or no action was let pass by without some remark. The latest topic and it had the honor of having more discussion than any since the Emperor's marriage, was the appearance of the Prince de Tristesse, the strange occupant of the mysterious "Alhambra" and on this evening all were in expectation, for it was announced that he would appear. The gamblers lacked interest in the play and the betting was light; all had their eyes on the door when any one was announced. Madame de Ebersville had not yet begun to play but sat nervously picking at her fan, for it was by her he was to be introduced. M. le Baron was not there but Eugenie was by her side, closely watching the curtains of the doorway, but Madame was too much engrossed in her own thoughts to notice the battle which Eugenie was waging in her heart.

At last there was a rumble of wheels outside as a carriage drove up the road leading to the entrance and a short time after, the porter at the door, called out "Le Prince de Tristesse" and all arose, something which had never happened before. Madame advanced to the door-way as

the curtains were drawn aside and the prince dressed in faultless black, advanced and extended his hand to her.

"I hope that I am not late" he said in his musical voice.

"It is never late at Madame Stilsits" is our motto Monsieur, but come and I shall introduce you."

He was then introduced to the company and created quite a sensation by his ready wit and his acquaintance and reference to each one's title and bits of history. Eugenie was seated at the end of the room nervously playing with her fan, her large gray eyes following the prince about the room. "No" echoed the inward voice but it was drowned out by the shrill "yes" which was sounding in her mind. The battle was at its height. The prince was now approaching in her direction.

"Ah Mademoiselle you have come, I am delighted with my reception, such galantry and beauty have seldom done me honor before."

"Prince of Sadness as you style yourself you must be mistaken," said Mademoiselle, "for if I err not there are all ranks and oftentimes the

best classes present at your fancied court of sadness."

"You are right in that respect, for at that court all classes have their places. On the right hand is a pauper who looks across at the king or queen on the left and amidst sighs says; "I am not happy, why am I not like him, he has luxury, wealth and plenty," while the nobility on their part look over and say, "Look at that pauper, no wealth to worry him, no diplomatic schemes to follow, look at his healthy body and mind; why am I not like him?" There the disappointed fall with their burden and the unhappy sink beneath its weight and ask for rest. Have you ever stopped to think how few times in the seventy years, that are allotted to man, that he can say 'now I am truly happy?' The young wish to have the experience of years upon them and old age prays and sighs for the buoyant grace and steps of his youth."

"But what consolation does the Prince of Sadness give these poor wretches who can find no rest?" asked Eugenie.

"None, none at all, and were I to give consolation and advice they would not follow it,

they would say 'my malady is incurable, I am doomed and must submit to its ravings.' "

"Come come" said Madame "this is not the time or place to preach a sermon."

"True we must game. Eugenie do you not play?"

"No I find more pleasure by looking on."

"That is right, watch the fire but do not step too closely or pick up the glowing coal to view its beauty or try to solve its mystery. Then it will not harm you, but take care do not look at it too much or too long, lest it dazzle and blind your eyes. But Madame a word with you ere we go to the tables" and he and Madame walked arm in arm towards the other room.

"You have money?" he asked.

"Some."

"How much?"

"About 6,000 francs.

"That will do. Stake high every other time I deal, take no chances at other times."

They entered the room and accepted places which brought them directly opposite. The deal was to the Prince's right two players, the cards were dealt, the bets were made and the player next to him won. His turn came to deal

but the betting was light and only small sums were staked. Next the prince dealt. A player several seats to his left drew a king, that amounted to seven points, the man next to him also drew a king and both bet high. The banker who was of course the prince bet double the amount. It was becoming interesting. Neither of the two opponents drew cards while the prince did. Then came the decision, both opponents had seven points, the card the prince drew made his seven and a half and he won. So the game progressed and so it came his deal again. Madame staked high against three opponents and won a nice sum. The game was steadily increasing in interest, both Madame and the prince waging small sums, when any one else dealt.

Once Madame was given a king amounting to seven. She staked high and was met by several other players. She drew no cards the second deal and some one held seven and a half so consequently she lost. The prince's eyes flashed fire as his met her's and she understood. After that she followed his instructions more explicitly and when the game was finished she had won a good round sum.

Then they wandered back to the ante chamber

and on the way Madame said "you are indeed strange, prince but I feel that I have done wrongly."

"Why, may I ask."

"Well to play."

"Has Madame never played before?"

"Yes er—but—"

"You are wondering how you came to win every time I dealt?"

"To be frank yes."

"The Prince of Sadness has magic in his touch. Did the players distrust me? No, then why should you?"

"Well enough of this but you are too kind to me."

"Not at all, you shall amply repay me. The Emperor is now moving on to Russia."

"How do you know."

"Details are too long. But what I want to know is for what reason. You can learn the reason for me can you not?"

"I am a spy."

"No Madame only a debtor paying a debt."

"Well then if I can find out you shall know tomorrow night. But where?"

"Here. You have not yet met all your husband's reverses, we shall play some more."

The news of Madame's winnings had come to the ears of her husband and as answer to his questions she turned over the sum to him. Well, at this stage of his financial state it made little difference where the money came from and besides it was considered no wrong to gamble and Madame attributed her winnings to a phenomenal run of luck. Although in her own mind she had wished herself out of the bargain a thousand times, for she saw the prince's hold becoming tighter upon her, but now that she had once started she must make the best of it. The renewal had been given, thanks to the prince's presence in the box and the plan of the gift to the prima donna.

The next night she and Eugenie were again at Madame Stilsits anxiously waiting for the prince to come. She had spent the greater part of the afternoon with the Empress and had gained the information she desired. The inward voice of Eugenie had been almost silenced and she had gradually surrendered to the malady that was preying on her heart.

At last the prince came. As he entered the

room his eyes met with those of a certain captain who was leaning on the back of a chair, conversing with the wife of his general. The prince's face brightened while that of the captain's became clouded as if some uncertainty of conviction still remained in his mind as to whether he had seen the prince's face before. The prince then approached Madame and Eugenie and extended to them his greeting. The captain sauntered closer and his eyes seemed never to leave the prince's face. The subject on which Madame and Eugenie had been conversing was jewelry and as the prince approached Madame said, "we have just been trying to decide whether or not my theory of that one can tell one's disposition by the jewelry one wears, is true or not."

"Pray explain yourself Madame and let me be your judge."

"Well I claim that one can read the temperament and disposition of a person by the jewelry or the kind of jewelry one most admires. For instance take our hostess, she is fond of opals, they flash fire, are brilliant, mysterious and gay; is she not all of that? Then, Eugenie here, her favorite jewels are rubies and pearls, they are so deep and burning in one respect, but do not

give out any fire, and pearls are always the significant of tears, silent and lasting. While you prince wear no jewelry whatever that I have noticed, excepting that cameo on the little finger. It is the head of a warrior, and from it I should read you as reserved, melancholy, and by the figure still a lover of a fair fight."

"Madame has a good theory and in most cases it holds good. As for you admiring this cameo, you are not the first to do so. Kings, emperors, queens and nobles of all rank have tried to purchase it or to solve its secret. There is also a history connected with it that makes it doubly valuable.

One day there came to the shop of an alchemist, here in the heart of your beautiful city, a man of ordinary dress and requested of the chemist that he form a drug that would be deadly poison, but in such a form that it would, before being dissolved, appear as a gem, and secondly, that there should be no traces of poison left in the stomach or blood of the victim." The man offered a vast reward and the chemist devoted all his time to this one end. Day and night he labored without success and one midnight, after failure after failure, as he was despairing and had

almost decided to take the virus he had just prepared from many acids and poisons, a drop from a retort over the table fell into the paste he was mixing. Out of despair he tried the new mixture on some animals which he kept for that purpose and to his astonishment it was the very poison he had sought for so long. But as that one drop, which completed his compound had fallen from one or perhaps several of the retorts, above the table, he knew not its composition, but the poison was his. He then moulded it into a cameo and when the man came again it was given to him for a vast sum after a trial of its strength. The chemist never knew the identity of the man to whom he had sold the poisonous ring. But some years later, the ring was found on the hand of the dead statesman and priest, who had lived through one whole intrigue and plot, the Cardinal Armond de Richelieu. Several years ago it came into my possession and I have worn it ever since, more as a curiosity than a precaution."

"That is indeed strange, but how does it work," asked Madame.

"By a spring here at the side the set is forced from its place. But come I see they are forming a game."

The captain had advanced to inform them that they were making a set to play.

"Allow me" said Madame "to introduce to you, prince, the Captain Moran of Napoleon's own guard."

"We have met before, have we not, but under a different name?" asked the captain fastening his eyes firmly on those of the prince, but no change was perceptible as the prince answered.

"Perhaps, but at any rate if an old acquaintance I am pleased to renew it, and if new, I am happy to begin it" and they went on to the tables while the prince murmured to himself: "sacre, I did not think he would remember Mario; he is still uncertain."

All began gaming and the bets that night were unusually large. The prince was quiet and several times he seemed to awaken from reveries when addressed. What plan was he now revolving in his mind? The captain lost steadily when the prince dealt and Madame won continually. The captain's loss was already counted by the thousand francs, while Madame's gain was that and far more and when the game stopped, the captain was moody and showed his heavy loss, for in fact he was bankrupt and

many others at the table were heavy losers, the prince losing about a thousand francs and Madame's winnings were something unheard of before at Madame Stilsits'.

When they stopped gaming they grouped about in small companies and refreshments were served. Madame did not seem joyous over her winnings and the captain had almost ceased to talk and sat brooding. The wine was passed and it so happened, that there were not enough glasses by one, on the tray which the waiter had brought for the group where the prince and the captain sat, and it also happened, that it was the captain who was not served. Madame was looking directly at the prince, she saw the lines in his face set firm, the steely glitter in his eye was brighter than usual. What was he doing? She saw the cameo slip from its setting in the ring and fall lightly into the blood red wine. There was but one bubble and the deadly poison was dissolved.

"What is he going to do" thought she spell-bound.

"Here captain, heavy losers should drown their sorrows first." Madame was in agony, it was going too far she would cry out and de-

nounce him. No she could not do that. That would only be denouncing herself. She must calmly sit by and see that man poisoned.

"No, I shall be served soon" Madame heard, as in a dream the captain say. But the prince had no turning back now.

"I deem it an honor, for who serves Napoleon is with me an equal and a compatriot, even if I do not take the field as you do. Thereby do me the honor accept it and I will offer a toast.

Here's to the bowl of nectar sweet
Around which again, old friendships meet.
Heap high its rim with laurel leaf
And though our meeting here be brief,
This hour's remembrance shall linger still,
As the ivy clings to the mouldering mill.
And though our joy and wassail be not long
For what is life but a short sad song;
Its notes now shrill and loud now but a sad refrain;
Let's bump, for who knows when we will meet again.
Then think not of the morrow's dawn or set,
We're glad to meet again and part with a regret."

Without suspicion the captain accepted the glass just as the servant brought one to the prince. Madame could not drink her's, there was an awful lump in her throat and her mind was whirling. The captain raised the glass to

his lips, a few inarticulate cries broke from Madame and she sank unconscious to the floor and in so doing knocked the glass from the captain's hand and shattered it on the floor. Stimulants were supplied and Madame gradually came to, looking about her with a wild stare. The prince came forward and leaning on his and Eugenie's arms they led her to the carriage and the prince accompanied them on their journey home ordering his own vehicle to follow.

CHAPTER VII.

MADAME SPECULATES.

Madame's nerves had received a severe shock but it gradually wore away. It all seemed to her like some horrible dream, for there beside her in the carriage was the prince, so attentive and soothing her with pleasing words. She could hardly believe what had happened and as if to convince herself, she glanced at the prince's hand; which in the excitement of assisting her to the coach he had neglected to glove. Sure enough there was the ring without its cameo set. Again that horrible scene rushed before her eyes.

"Prince your cameo is missing," she meekly said in an undertone for her head was resting on his shoulder and the noise of the wheels made her voice inaudible to Eugenie.

"Jewelry like poisons are sometimes worthless. But how is Madame now?"

"Much better. The captain is he well?"

"Perfectly, you are a good doctor." This was all the reference made to the affair.

"Madame has made a big winning tonight. But the debts are not yet paid."

"Prince, I shall never again enter Madame Stilsits."

"That is not necessary. Madame will do well by buying silks tomorrow. Buy at nine in the morning as much as you have won tonight and sell at two in the afternoon."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you should buy all the silks available and you can buy much for now they are very low, but sell promptly at two in the afternoon at the highest price. But the reason of Napoleon's visit into Russia, what does he mean?"

"I visited the Empress this afternoon."

"Yes."

"She wondered at my strange acquaintance at the 'Alhambra.'"

"I knew that."

So the plot was thickening. Madame could not now play him false for she saw by his last remark that there must be another source from

which he also gained information, probably a spy watching a spy.

"In the course of the conversation I learned that Napoleon's main reason was to conquer Alexander because"—

"He loves Josephine and Napoleon is jealous even with his new love."

"I also learned that he shall march on and take all the cities, ending with Moscow, which will place the entire country in his power."

Then a silence.

"I may soon leave Paris."

"So soon?" came to Eugenie's ears as the horses had slackened into a walk. She did not know that they had been conversing.

"I have business somewhere else."

"And in the meantime?"

"If you gain news of any movements, a message to the "Alhambra will reach me," pursued the two not noticing that the brougham did not make enough noise to completely drown their voices.

A suspicion was dawning upon Eugenie's mind. Either Madame was faithless to her husband, an old ill-humored man or there may be something deeper. "No, it could not be either,"

she thought "Madame is the soul of honor and the prince is the same." The inward voice could not be heard. Eugenie was rushing on at a tremendous rate and even if she thought, that she was mistaken nevertheless the suspicion remained. "He is going away? Where? To some mistress?" She had never thought of that before. Her love had grown so strong for him that she had not even given it a thought, that he might care for some one else. Then besides he had never encouraged her, rather the opposite. "Love is but the prelude to marriage as the first act to a tragedy, shun the prelude and the play will cease." He posed as a single man, but may he not even be married for all she knew. "No, he is honorable, it cannot be, but still he is going away. Where?" Suspicion, to lovers is the rack of the inquisition of love and it tortured and rent the fibers of her brain until she felt that she would go mad. The carriage stopped at Madame's and they entered the house after making an engagement with the prince.

The next morning, through her lawyer, a poor struggling honest young man, who had incessantly tried to get into the good graces of Eugenie's favor and Madame was not at all adverse

to this, but had so far failed completely, bought up all the available silks and that was much, for the market was stocked with silks and the price was at a fabuously low ebb. He went about it in a quiet way and in an hour had bought over thirty thousand francs worth of the fabric, when suddenly there was a rush.

The price of silks immediately jumped to twice its former station, then three times as much and steadily advanced. He at first wondered at Madame's strange actions but he was told with such force to buy all the available silks, as if she doubted if he would explicitly follow her dictates, for he had tried to dissuade her when she informed him of his mission. Knowing his kindly feeling towards her, she thought that he may only invest a small amount in order, as he thought, to save the rest for her. But now that the orders were so forcibly impressed upon his mind, he went ahead as she had bid him, but not without hesitancy.

Madame did not for one moment mistrust the prince's counsel, for she felt that he had dealt squarely with her and would not betray so valuable a tool. Steadily the price of silks went up. Jean congratulated himself that he had invested

the whole sum and had not followed his first impulse. At noon the stock suddenly came to a standstill and he drove pell mell to Madame.

"Madame," he shouted as he rushed into the house, "the stock is at a stand. Your instructions were not to sell until two precisely. My advice is to sell without delay." Madame was wavering.

"Perhaps it would be best?" she half asked herself. Then the remembrance of the conversation with the prince came back to her and she was again firm. "No, wait until two. Not a moment sooner."

"Madame has heard my advice; you run your own risk."

"It is my own money invested and if I lose, it is my own money lost, you will get your fee the same."

"Oh Madame you have grossly misjudged me. It was not for my fee that I thought, it was only your own welfare and that of——" he hesitated.

"Of Eugenie" Madame finished. Pardon me, my words were hasty and as far as Eugenie is concerned, you know how my feelings are toward you, but it seems of no avail."

"Not until then?"

"Not until two."

"But if the stock begins to decline."

"Not until two."

He came back and on the way he met a friend who rushed up to him exclaiming: "Silks are still going up, up, up, it seems as though they will never stop, why, the paper published an account this morning, directly after you bought the silks, that Le Prince de Tristesse had invested a fortune and that he had received word from a reliable source, that silks would rise higher than they had ever before. A reporter had seen the letter on the prince's desk with his own eyes."

Higher and higher the price arose until by two o'clock they had reached a stage unheard of before. Buyers were plentiful, but sellers few. Those who had stock would not sell. Precisely at two, Jean sold the entire amount and not a moment too soon, for the silks began to decline as speedily as they had risen, until at midnight they were back again to their first price, or very near it. Madame had gained a fortune, which far exceeded the one her husband had lost on the same article. Those who did not sell, lost and those who did not buy early in the day, lost vast amounts of money.

That evening Madame, Engenie and a gathering of friends assembled at the "Alhambra" and viewed again its beauties and its mysteries. The prince met Madame with a smile, "You made a fortune this morning did you not?"

"Yes thanks to your advice. But how did you know all beforehand?"

"Nothing was easier it is very simple. The people are interested it seems, intensely interested in *Le Prince de Tristesse*, is it not so?"

"They are."

"Because I am rich, strange and mysterious."

"Yes."

"Well, I am daily beset by reporters and tale-bearers until I have closed my doors against them. Well yesterday one visited me, a letter was on my desk, presumably addressed to me, telling me to buy all silk possible as there would be a great jump in the price. Reporters' eyes are for their papers, this one saw the dispatch, just what I wanted, while I of course was occupied. He read it, his eyes bulged, he fidgeted in his chair to get away. Finally I gave him my attention, then seeing the dispatch, I quickly tore it into fragments as though it were for no one but myself to see. Then I kept him occu-

pied long enough until I was certain that he would have no time to invest what little money he might have saved. And then it was all over. His paper gave an account how the Prince de Tristesse had received a dispatch, then there was a rush for the stock with the result. But come, let us mingle with the crowd, the next dance is about to begin and I must find Engenie.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE OR DUTY.

The "Alhambra" was ablaze with light, its chandeliers were sparkling and glittering and the sweet strains of music swelled and died throughout the grand reception room of pure white marble. The musical tinkle of the fountain echoed through the hall a pleasant accompaniment. Gracefully the dancers swayed and glided in perfect rythm with the music of the hidden orchestra. Eugenie, leaning lightly on the prince's arm, entered the hall and prepared to dance.

The conversation of the night before between Madame and the prince was still ringing in her ears and poisoning her brain with suspicion. "Would some one else be leaning on his arm to-morrow night, some one he loved dearly?" she asked herself, "some one he did not dissuade from loving him, but rather encouraged?" For

some reason she was in a mood for melancholy. "Was it because he was going away, or was it that she might never see him again?" she wondered.

That music, that intoxicating swell of harmony, now rising and thundering like a turbulent battle, then sinking to a low mournful cadence like the pleading of a soul in agony. Oh the tears were ready to start at any moment. What a power this man had to conjure up her feelings of love without the least encouragement, but rather by its discouragement. Would he not breathe one word of love, one embrace, one glance, to say that "It is not another I go to see; it is duty that calls me hence." No, not a word, nor a glance, nor a sigh. Onward they floated as a boat glides in silence over the mirror-like surface of the silent lake, giving not the least ripple to warn its dreamers of the depth they were gliding to. She could not believe it was another he was going to, it could not be. To-night she must know. That feeling of jealousy and love was driving her on. But how was she to find out?

"Mademoiselle is quiet."

"Monsieur is going to leave?"

"Late tonight."

"You will come again?"

"Perhaps, no one can tell his fate."

"Monsieur you are always gloomy."

Silence. The music ceased. Eugenie excused herself, the tears were ready to start at any time she could not trust herself longer. "He was going away to some one else." Hurrying along the hall, choking back her sobs, seeking some place to give free vent to her feelings, she sought the secluded spot of the library and throwing herself into the great chair before the desk, she laid her head upon her arms and her whole frame shook with anguish. The hot tears sprang from her eyes upon her bare arms, her hand clutched a bundle of papers as if for support.

Slowly the storm of anguish began to pass away. Her weakness turned to firmness.

"Why should I love this man?" she asked herself. "I have only known him for a short space of time, let him go to his mistress' embraces. Let him shower her mouth with his kisses; I shall not show the weakness of my sex, I cannot, no I will not confess to a soul my feelings. In the whirlpool of my love I shall sink without

a cry for mercy upon my lips, or reach out a hand for assistance. I shall sink it deep in my heart and bury it there, then no one can—”

The room was dimly lighted, her eyes had fallen upon the papers which she had by chance held in her hand, which she had grasped with the frenzy of her anguish. The music floated upon her ears like a strange weird accompaniment to her recital. Slowly her hand relaxed its grasp, a pallor over-spread her face, for she recognized the seal of the exiled king. By the dim light she read: “Go at once to Russia. Napoleon is pressing on” then the seal.

The words were few but she interpreted their meaning. Suddenly there came over her a strange feeling, from a chill it turned to burning hot, it seemed as though the penetrating glance of a pair of eyes were upon her; the door was at her back, she arose and there stood the prince, a smile upon his beautiful face. The paper fell from her hand and fluttered to the floor. She was as if pinioned to the spot whereon she stood. The conversation of the night before flashed through her mind. Madame was then also a spy. The silence was awkward; finally the voice of the prince, low, firm and musical sounded in the room.

"Mademoiselle understands the paper she has read?" The answer was a nod.

"Mademoiselle wondered at my strange departure. She knows now why?"

Again a nod. Then she spoke.

"You are a spy."

"A spy must never acknowledge it, even if it is true."

"It is then duty that calls you away?"

"Yes Mademoiselle."

"I am a loyal subject to Napoleon, one cry would place you in the hands of the authorities."

"I am at your mercy" said he calmly.

Then silence.

"Disclosure would mean—?"

"Death to me."

There was an awful struggle in her mind. It was the old battle between love and duty.

"This is the only proof to compromise you?"

"Here. Yes."

Slowly she stooped and hesitatingly picked up the scrap of paper which lay between them. Like a statue she stood for a moment, then slowly she raised the paper, until it reached the flame of light and a few charred crisps fell at her feet. "Monsieur has his freedom. Once I give it but

once only, and if it ever so happens that I should be in such a position again, I would be forced to act differently."

"The cause Mademoiselle, I cannot understand?"

"Never mind the cause, the action is enough. Call it weakness, call it mercy, they are oftentimes the same. But by this action, judge me not as you would judge Madame. She may be your spy but I am not."

"Mademoiselle has my deepest gratitude. The workings and caprices of fate we know not. I leave tonight, perhaps never to return again. A spy's life is not his own. It may be his king's, it may be his country's, mine is neither. It belongs to that passion which drives one on and on, until he either accomplishes his end or falls in the attempt. Revenge, revenge, strong, burning, glowing runs in my veins and forces me onward. Napoleon's ambition is favor, wealth and greatness. I like a vampire will fasten my fangs upon it and suck its strength away, or die in the attempt. To die? What is it, but the cessation of pain and passion. Enough Mademoiselle the night grows late and ere the morn I shall be on my way to accomplish my end and

should we never meet again, place love in shackles of forgetfulness and let honor be your only shrine of worship." He stooped and kissed her hand quickly, she making no resistance but stood as if petrified and he was slowly withdrawing when she raised her head.

"Monsieur has an affair of honor at day-break."

An expression of astonishment and embarrassment overspread his face.

"How know you that?"

"I saw the exchange of cards."

"Mademoiselle will favor me by keeping this affair quiet. It will soon be over and I shall be lying on the ground or on my way by day-break."

Monsieur Andre is a fine swordsman."

"You fear for me?"

"N—o,—I do not know your ability."

"Trust it to me. Au revoir Mademoiselle, au revoir, perhaps forever," and he was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NICKED RAPIER.

That night Madame de Ebersville and Eugenie rode home together. At Madame's door Eugenie made the strange request to spend the night with her and Madame surmised correctly that something was amiss, for all the way home Eugenie had nervously played with the trimming on her cape which protected her bare shoulders from the cool morning air. It was almost two in the morning when they entered Madame's home.

"Eugenie what is it? I can see something is worrying you."

"Oh Madame something awful, something beyond comprehension. Monsieur Le Prince fights Monsieur Andre at sun-rise."

"Is that all? He is capable of taking care of himself, do you not think? But how did you find this out?"

"I saw the cards exchanged. But that is not all. I warned the prince of Monsieur's ability as a swordsman. I did not see the prince after that. I was strolling down through the conservatory, when in a secluded nook, hidden by palms I heard voices in a guarded conversation. It was Monsieur Andre and his second the Le Captain Moran making arrangements for the duel."

"Moran" he said "I know it will succeed. He must be put out of the way."

"But Monsieur that is not fair, can you not kill him in a fair duel, you who are considered the best swordsman of France? I do not like this work at all."

"I tell you I do not trust him. I have seen him use a foil at play with Monsieur Edmonds, and he uses it excellently. My plan will succeed admirably, a little niche with a file will be made close to the hilt of one of the rapiers. You will hold three for the choice. As he has first pick, hold the one with the nicked blade closer to him than the others. If he chooses that one, well and good. If he does not I will have to rely upon my skill. Should I see him take the defective weapon I will know my game. So there is not such a bad business about

it. If he chooses the nicked rapier, a quick stroke, after a few feints, will snap it close to the hilt. There will be no suspicion. It will be attributed to the steel being cold or a flaw. Come what do you say?"

"No I do not like it."

"Besides I suspect him."

"Of what?"

"A spy to the king."

"Are you sure?"

"No. I am not positive. Come you have lost much the last few days, play this thing through and you will be amply rewarded."

"Then" said Eugenie "I rushed out to find Le prince but he was not to be found. The butler said that he had left in a carriage. Oh Madame what shall I do?"

"Trust to his good luck."

"What and let him be foully murdered?"

"What do you care?"

"What do I care? Honor is enough to care for."

"Perhaps it is more than honor, which makes you so impatient to save him."

"I am not a spy as others are" was the cold retort.

Madame's face flushed but she let the taunt go by unheeded.

"You go rest yourself and tomorrow all will be well. You are excited and nervous and perhaps it is not as bad as you think."

Eugenie saw plainly that Madame was not much concerned about the prince's safety, for should he be killed then a great secret would be taken from her mind. So Eugenie formed her own plans and withdrew to her room in silence.

About an half hour before dawn a figure in black stole from Eugenie's room and quietly hastened along the corridors, out into the open air. For a moment she paused and then she hurried through the court-yard to the stable. It would take too much time to wake the groom. A window was silently opened, applying her strength it opened wide enough to admit her.

Madame had in her stable a beautiful black horse for her own pleasure riding. In climbing through the window, Eugenie over-turned an obstacle which made much noise. For a moment she stood and held her breath but everything was silent. Could she find Madame's saddle? She was rumaging about in the dark when

suddenly a light flashed in her face and the barrel of a pistol was pointed straight at her. At the sight of Eugenie the groom lowered the weapon.

"Madame is very ill, and I am going for some medicine from the doctor. Quick saddle her horse."

"Mademoiselle I will go for you."

"No that will not do, you do not know what she requires. Quick, saddle him." There was no alternative so he quickly followed her instructions. All through the operation of saddling the horse, the animal stood champing his bit and violently pawing the floor.

"Mademoiselle he is wild this morning, it is best you let me go."

"No I cannot; I will manage him all right."

Helping her slight figure into the saddle, he let loose the rein and the animal sped along the driveway at a rapid rate. It was a full half hour's ride from Madame's home to the forest where the bout was to be held and Eugenie knew that she had no time to lose. A cold breeze was stirring and the noise of the clattering hoofs, on the pavements, awoke the echoes. The animal needed no encouragement, only too glad to have

his freedom he sped along the road at a terrific gait, Mademoiselle riding him gracefully. After awhile she reached the edge of the forest and followed the little winding pathway, the over-hanging boughs at times just grazed her head. The morning twilight was just breaking and here and there a red streak, like a smear of blood, flashed on the horizon. Now and then a twitter of the birds in the trees sounded as she passed in her hurried flight.

"They must have begun" she murmured to herself. A few moments later and she heard in the distance the cold rasp of steel. Her face was burning hot and the breeze was a welcome balm.

"Mon Dieu! what if he has chosen the nicked rapier." Now for the first time, she urged the horse to quicken his speed. The clash came louder and nearer at every stride. "Mon Dieu! any moment may be the end." The sound had ceased, her face turns from fire to cold. Was it over? She could draw the picture in her mind, of the prince laying on the ground, the soil about him dyed crimson with his fast ebbing life, the handle of the broken rapier in his hand—good God why had she not started sooner—. What

was that? No it was not over yet, again the sound caught her ear, they were at it once more. Probably the last pause was caused by a touch.

Onward the horse staggered, weak with his exhaustion; another moment and she rushed into the open spot, riding between the astonished combatants who, at the sound of her approach had ceased their onslaught. Hastily she dismounted. "Mademoiselle de Vere," all exclaimed. She was cold and deliberate but it was forced.

"Mademoiselle" the prince said "I asked and you promised that this affair of honor would be uninterrupted."

"Monsieur, this is not an affair of honor. It is murder, base murder."

"Well then do not disturb us" said Andre coldly, "come Monsieur we will finish" and he brushed Mademoiselle roughly aside. There was a swish and Eugenie's riding whip fell full across his face and left its mark.

"Stop" she cried "you murderer and coward."

Had Mademoiselle been a man, she would have been killed on the spot. As it was, Andre rushed forward, and no one knows how the affair would have ended, but Captain Moran wrenched

the rapier from his hand and stood between him and Eugenie, his handsome face beaming with rage.

"Is it not enough to make one attempt?" he asked.

"What is the meaning of this Mademoiselle, the endangerment of your life?" enquired the prince.

"It means Monsieur, that I have come to save you from being murdered."

"I do not understand?"

"Monsieur will try his weapon over his knee, if it does not break he may resume the bout without interruption and I will withdraw. I mean that if you have not chosen the nicked rapier—"

"What is this about a nicked rapier?"

"You have almost been the victim of a base plot. Monsieur will do me the honor to try his sword."

Andre, during the conversation, was slowly edging from the group towards where the horses which had brought them were tethered to a tree. The prince bent his weapon across his knee and it snapped like a twig. Just then there was a shout and Andre who had gained his horse leaped into the saddle and dashed away.

CHAPTER X.

AN ACT OF PITY.

The frozen stillness of the north was disturbed by the rumbling wheels of artillery and the tramp of armed men. "Russia must be conquered," was Napoleon's thought. "The world must bow at my feet." Campaigning in Russia was bound to try his patience and control, it was not the same as fighting over ground which was well known, where there was an abundance of provisions and where there was not the sting of bitter cold. Only Napoleon's prestige and the constant hope of victory led the weakened army onward. The suffering was almost unendurable. True, battles were won, but at what cost? A cost so great that they were almost as much as a defeat. Each day brought fresh misfortune and new dissatisfaction. Soldiers dreamed of home and dear ones. The camp-fires only served to bring happy recollections of the past. But

Napoleon said, Alexander must be humbled and Moscow must fall, if he must do it himself.

Thus far he had met with stern resistance but always was he victorious. Moscow must fall in a short time, for he was now not more than a night's march from his destiny. The city must be taken either by surprise or by force, but surrender it must, for Napoleon's mind was set and nothing could dissuade him.

Just as dusk was falling, a man wrapped deep in a long red cloak, his face almost hidden in its folds, sat near to the smouldering embers of a dying fire, shaded so as not to attract attention. Near by sat another, warming his tingling fingers at the fire, a youth with a slender, light figure and an honest open face. The ground was covered for miles and miles, as far as the eye could reach, with a white coating of snow. At times flakes would descend and strike the face with a stinging coldness. Suddenly the youth raised his head and spoke: "Mario, will Napoleon move on Moscow tonight, do you think?"

"Nothing is more probable François, he will take it by surprise if we do not warn the city."

At this point the army was divided. Some camped at one place and the other half was further in advance. Between these two sat Mario

and Francois, the King's servant. The soldiers were of better spirit for shelter was near at hand and Napoleon had promised them that, that night they should have plenty of comfort.

Suddenly hoof falls were audible in the distance. Quickly the two quietly slid from the fire into the darkness. Soon the rider came nearer, changing his course to find the meaning of the dying embers. Suddenly, from the darkness came a hand, which seized the bridle, sending the horse back upon his haunches with such force that it unseated its rider. A curse broke from the man as he sprawled upon the snow. For a moment he was stunned, but for a moment only and he was on his feet, his hand on his sword, but he was not quick enough. A strong hand gripped his throat and another held his wrist as in a vice of steel. Strangely there was not the least noise.

Hand to hand they struggled, but the dismounted rider was no match for his opponent, and he was soon on his back, the man pressing heavily upon his breast with his knee.

"Come your orders," panted the captor.

"I have none."

"You lie. Produce them. Quick! Your life depends upon it. There is not a moment to

lose, you are the messenger to order the advance guard to move, and Napoleon may now be marching on to join them and then take Moscow."

"I have no orders" panted the man.

The figure made no answer, but from beneath his cloak drew his dagger and pressed it to the prostrate man's neck.

"Quick not a moment must be lost." The man felt the point uncomfortably near his jugler and said:

"In my bosom."

With a quick, dexterous movement the man ripped the doublet clean and reached the order. Then by the light of the fire, still holding the man beneath him he read:

"Will join you soon, then take Moscow by surprise at daybreak."

As the light flashed up the men's eyes met, and almost simultaneously, they exclaimed "Pierre;" "Mario." These were the only words spoken and Mario and François quickly bound Captain Moran hand and foot with their sword belts, but not without a struggle for he recognized the result should Napoleon's army not stumble upon him.

"Napoleon will take Moscow at day-break, I

surmised as much. Au revoir Monsieur le Captain," and with a triumphant laugh Mario disappeared. From a clump of trees Mario led his horse and waited for François, who had remained behind, to scatter the still glowing embers. It seemed as though the last spark of the Captain's hope was dying. He understood his fate, should he not be discovered ere morning. The Captain's eyes followed François' every movement with entreaty plainly written in them, but he said nothing.

"Monsieur, you are brave" whispered François.

No answer.

"I cannot see a brave man die of starvation and cold without a chance."

"Come. Come," shouted Mario. François stood hesitatingly. One stroke of his knife would free the man. Pity was working in his mind. Mario was again calling him to hasten and he started to follow him. When, suddenly, as if his mind had been made up, he retraced the few steps he had taken, he stooped over the prostrate man and drew his knife from its sheath. "I will release you" he whispered "but do not move until we are gone."

"Sacre are you coming?" cried Mario impati-

ently. The bonds were cut the man was free, but he lay still and as François bounded away the cold wind brought him the heartfelt words, "Merci, merci Monsieur."

Mounting his horse, he and Mario dug their spurs into the flanks and away they dashed to warn Moscow of its impending danger. Onward they struggled through the deep snow, while the cold cutting wind brought fresh flakes to blind them and hinder their progress. The darkness was intense, not a spark was discernible and they relied wholly upon Mario's knowledge of the way they were traveling. Onward they rode in silence, every now and then giving their horses a breathing spell. They had ridden an hour or so when Mario suddenly stopped, "What is it?" François asked.

"Do you not hear anything?"

"No" he answered.

"Faster faster," was all Mario said but in such a way that meant to serve as a warning. Onward they rushed while the snow began to fall heavier and heavier, their horses at times stumbling into drifts, which the wind had heaped high. After awhile they stopped again. This time sure enough, there came to François' ears a low

ominous sound, a sound of terror and horror, but he could not make it out. Was it the rumble of cannon wheels, or the trampling of cavalry? He could not interpret the sound.

"It cannot be the army?" he asked.

"Worse. We must move faster, or we will never reach Moscow."

"What is it?" asked the terrified François.

Mario gave no time for explanation as every moment was valuable, but François heard the word "wolves." Louder and louder that low muttering growl grew. But Moscow must be warned.

Already François' horse was stumbling with weakness and every moment brought the blood thirsty pack nearer to its prey and it would only be a short time when there would be an encounter.

Suddenly without warning François' horse stumbled, but regained itself, but was lagging far behind Mario. "Had the pack stumbled upon the Captain? Praise God, his conscience was clear but Mario's how was his?" It did not seem to bother him the least, this disciple of the devil. The next moment Mario drew rein. The snarling and snapping was clearly audible.

"Dismount. Your horse can no longer carry you," he said and coolly drew his sword from its sheath and thrust the cold steel through its panting sides. The animal sank to the ground. "That will serve to hold them for a time. But if we do not soon come upon a village we are lost. Mount back of me."

The growls were louder now, as the beasts fought over the carcass of the horse but it would only be a moment's respite and a whetting to their appetite. Mario's horse labored faithfully onward under its double weight but the pack was soon again moving.

"Use your spurs." Mario shouted and the blood came faster from the already bleeding sides of the horse, but of no avail. The leaders of the pack were already upon them and one sprang forward at the laboring beast's neck, but found the needle point of Mario's blade and sank down, to have its life blood drank by its followers and serve as another respite. Suddenly there loomed up a hut before them, then a larger house. They were saved, it was the outskirts of Moscow, into the yard of an inn they rushed and Moscow was warned.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THE BURNING OF MOSCOW.

Some time afterwards, the advancing army stumbled upon Pierre's benumbed body. After awhile he was revived and his first words were: "the man in the red cloak," but that was enough, all understood.

A curse broke from Napoleon, "Sacre, he is everywhere, we must move faster."

Napoleon's dilapidated army the next day, the 5th of September entered Moscow and to his surprise was met with no resistance, the first time in his Russian campaign. The authorities were gone and everything was quiet.

Darkness had just settled over the city. The soldiers were comfortable and praised their leader. Rioting was at its height, the discarded dice were brought into play, the cards were shuf-

fled and the noise within, drowned out the noise without. Cellars were looted of their stock and store of delicacies and wines. Soldiers chattered of their great victory. Officers congregated together, bumped their glasses, congratulated themselves, little doubting or little thinking of the great plot that was working against them.

Suddenly in the midst of this revelry and was-sail, there came the cry of, "fire, fire." All rushed out to extinguish the blaze, but it was too late. That same cry sounded in every street, to the consternation of the whole army. The conflagration spread with such rapidity that soon the whole city was a sea of flame and smoke, fanned into greater fierceness by the strong wind. Mario had gained his point.

Building after building fell midst showers of sparks, it seemed as if it were a huge funeral pyre, built to cremate Napoleon's ambition. Street after street became impassable. Horsemen dashed through the burning embers, shouting command after command, which were unheeded. Men rushed hither and thither, but to no effect. Napoleon was stationed in the highest part of the city, reviewing the grand but

awful and distracting sight before him. Dark figures were seen, flitting about in the shadows with fire-brands in their hands, setting fire to the parts of the city which were not yet consumed or being consumed. The army was in a wretched state. They had plenty of fire, but provisions were being taken right from their grasp. Every now and then a deafening explosion was heard, showing that powder was also used in the destruction.

In the midst of the falling buildings, a figure with a fluttering cloak, was making his way to the place where Napoleon was stationed. Nearer and nearer he came, dodging into the shadows. Once a house toppled and fell amidst a burst of flame and revealed this man to Napoleon.

"Stop him. Stop him" he shouted "stop the man in the red cloak, he has caused all this."

Several rushed forward, but were driven back by the awful heat. One dashed through the circle and met the approaching man. With their swords they fought, "the man in the red cloak" carrying in his other hand a flaming torch. What his motive might be was not exactly clear, but he met his opponent and their swords

crossed. Stroke after stroke, parry after parry, lunge after lunge and the man in the red cloak was slowly but surely forcing his opponent to retreat into the circle of flame, which was separating Napoleon and him more and more.

Now they were treading the very sparks, so close were they to the fire. The heat was almost unbearable but they fought on, the one with desperation, for death stared him in the face. The other with determination to gain his end. Suddenly a building fell and hid them from Napoleon's view, but after the sparks were gone and the smoke was driven away, he saw the flutter of a cloak to his left and its wearer was alone.

Then there was a cry "save yourself Majesty: save yourself Napoleon, the house is undermined with powder."

Napoleon retreated hastily through the outlet which was kept open for him. Hardly had he reached a place of safety, when there was a terrific explosion and the spot whereon he stood was a mass of smouldering ruins. Sullenly the forces followed Napoleon upon that famous retreat. Those who were not killed by the cos-

sacks, who constantly hovered around the rear of the army, either died on the road from starvation and cold, or dragged themselves half dead after their defeated general. That was a memorable night, for it was the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER II.

EXILE.

It seemed as if Napoleon's career was checked, even if not forever, for a time at least. Dejected and defeated, the victor of so many battles dragged himself homeward, followed by his dilapidated and bewildered army. The men were glad to hear once again the command that they were on their way to home and loved ones, their ardor and spirit had forsaken them and dejectedly they followed the conquered conqueror on his famous retreat.

Peace was again, if such it may be styled, for Napoleon was vanquished and had surrendered and was sent into an exile, which to many others would not have been an exile: but to this Emperor of Emperors and soldier of soldiers it was bitter humiliation. He was made an officer of the little Isle of Elba.

The Bourbons ascended the throne they had

lost, but it was not Louis XVI, he had died and it was his brother Louis XVIII who was propped upon the vacant, insecure throne. The flag of the Bourbons floated and revelry and victorious joy, like the smouldering fires of a volcano, burst forth with renewed energy and force.

Everywhere was pleasure and enjoyment with the Bourbons, while the Napoleonic followers quietly left their posts of honor and settled into silent submission. An entirely new regime was taking place and everything was changed. Napoleon was an exile. Josephine was retired in the solitude of Malmaison, dreaming of happy days gone by, the Prince de Tristesse was absent from the "Alhambra," no one knew where, Mario was buried in the silent shadow of Chateau de Nuit. Thus for a time silent, peaceful pleasure, rested over the country so rent and torn by strife and war.

But Napoleon on the island of Elba, like a lion rising from its night of restful slumber, hungry and impatient for another conflict to assert its powers, was silently and securely gathering about him an army to regain what he had lost. That restless spirit could not be satisfied to remain within its bounds, that spirit

longed for contests it had so often fought. That warrior feeling arose in his breast and longed for the din of battle, for the thunder of cannon and the rattle of musketry. His dreams must be realized. When Napoleon said must, there was no retraction, his will must either be fulfilled, or unconditional surrender.

Suddenly Paris was thrown into a great state of excitement. Rumors spread from mouth to mouth that Napoleon had left the island with a handful of men and was on his way to the continent. It was indeed true. On the 26th day of February, 1815, he set sail with a few barks conveying his little band. He passed the vigilance of those set to watch him and had gained a good start. What must have been his feelings on that day? Returning to a country where he did not know whether the people would meet him with resistance or with open arms. He returned to France and at Grenoble the troops sent out to prevent his entrance to the land he had caused so much suffering and pain, when they saw the gray coat of the Emperor and heard the voice which had commanded them above volleys of musketry, dropped their arms and shouted in one

voice, "vive L' Empereur" and gathered about his standards. The French people are a strange nation and are ever ready for a change and now there was a chance. By this time they were dissatisfied with the Bourbon regime and the old spirit of past days was again awakened and Napoleon had won the first victory in his new campaign without a struggle. One alone stood firm and he had promised to bring back the Corsican in an iron cage. But he was only firm, until he saw the colors under which he had so often fought and until he heard the shouts of his men, he had so often led beneath those colors, and he was again Marshall Ney.

Like the rays of the morning sun, as they burst forth in the east, first playing along the horizon and then over-spreading all the heavens with a welcome light, so the news of Napoleon's return spread over all France. Hamlet and city joined in one acclamation of gladness at the Emperor's return. Onward Napoleon went and nearer and nearer he came to Paris. Troops, that were sent out against him, were only sent to re-inforce his fast growing army, and generals who had intended to raise their swords against Napoleon,

broke their blades across their knees and joined with their soldiers to fight for the Emperor. The corporal violet had appeared, about whom a certain class of people had spoken, and the meaning of the bunches of violets, worn in the lapel or on the breast or in the hair was explained. Paris was terror stricken at the conqueror's near approach. Louis fled and the city was placed in the hands of Marshal Soult and the police. Onward Napoleon came on his triumphal march, until once again he sat upon the throne, until once again he was Emperor of France. But his triumph was of short duration. It arose in a night and it was destined to fall in almost as short a time, but there was more action crowded into the hundred days following his return than any other space of time of the same duration.

It was not the Frenchmen who defeated Napoleon, it was not one nation that humbled the Emperor, but four. Alexander could not forget and the old feeling of hatred arose and would not be silenced. There was another, who could not smother out his feelings and gave them full play; stronger than ever Mario again threw himself into the conflict, stronger than ever and with

more cunning and daring. Through the combined efforts of these two, although working separately, the old coalition of 1813, consisting of Russia, Prussia, England and Sweden was again renewed and again the joint forces took the field to conquer once more the conqueror.

CHAPTER III.

CAUGHT IN A NET.

The lily, the emblem of the House of Bourbon, which had flourished at the breast of fair women at the court balls, began to fade and droop until it was succeeded entirely by the violet. Mario was again at work. He had been in Paris several days and, after ascertaining the strength of his adversary and in what manner to act, he decided to leave the city. At last when he arrived at the outskirts he was confronted by a soldier.

"I beg Monsieur's pardon but does he leave the city?"

"Yes."

"Then you have the password?"

"Password? Is then Paris guarded?"

"Yes Monsieur. We have orders to let no one pass without the word."

"Whose orders are they?"

"I received mine from the Captain, from whom he has them I do not know."

"But if I have not the word?"

"Then you cannot pass," said the guard resolutely.

Several soldiers were at a distance and slowly approaching the two.

"Be careful, I have my sword and may pass by that countersign."

"Monsieur forgets that soldiers carry swords to enforce orders."

"Come, away with idle words, I have great interests in leaving Paris, the affair is urgent and I have not time enough to return and get the password, but I have money."

"Money may buy you into heaven, through the church, but money cannot buy you out of Paris."

"Well, then I shall pass otherwise."

"Not until you cross my dead body, the orders are strict and I shall not break them."

It was too late for Mario to retreat, undoubtedly Napoleon had thrown Paris into a sort of drag-net and it would not do for him to be caught in it. He had but one alternative and this he chose. By this time both had their swords in

hand and the fight was progressing rapidly, when the soldiers seeing their comrade engaged ran up. Then began a fight in which all participated. Mario backed against a wall so as to keep them from forming a circle around him and fight him from all sides. The sentry fell with a deep wound in his neck and Mario fought like a demon the remaining three. Another fell but fatigue was fast showing itself and soon he fainted to the ground and the others rushed upon him and bound his hands behind his back. As one was kneeling over his prostrate body he sprang up with a cry. "It is Mario, the man in the red cloak, the Emperor will pay well for this capture." They carried him to an impromptu prison, formed from an old strongly built chateau, which had been changed into a prison during these stormy times as was often the case. A strong guard was placed about the prison and Mario was conveyed to a room, well guarded by bars and oaken doors. To make things more certain, for they trusted not this man, they manacled his hands in strong irons.

Like wild fire the news spread of Mario's strange capture. It was first whispered from mouth to mouth with uncertainty, for the cap-

ture of such a dare-devil was so doubtful that few gave it credence, but soon the news was confirmed and all the Emperor's followers shouted it aloud through the streets. "Mario is taken; Mario is taken," came from every corner and the Emperor and his army breathed freer, for there was not one who did not fear to meet this unknown, mysterious spy.

A man, young, slender, more fit for a plaything for the hearts of women than to carry a sword, was mingling in the crowd when suddenly a great burley soldier next to him shouted: "Mario is taken."

"What is it you shout?" cried the young man.

"Is it not good news for you? You who flashed your eyes on me in such a manner?"

"Pardon, but did I hear you correctly, did you say that Mario, the man in the red cloak was captured?"

"Those were my words and God be praised, for he causes more harm to our cause than all the armies put together and his sword in single combat is twice as long as any other."

François, for it was he, the King's valet, and one of Mario's able assistants, whom we have already met on the way to Moscow, when his pity

overcame him and he saved the Captain Pierre Moran's life, did not deem it wise to ask too many questions of one person so he procured the details from many sources and being in possession of the pass-word he mounted his horse and left Paris. Once out of the city he pushed his horse at utmost speed for he knew that if Mario was to be saved it must be done quickly, for the Emperor would not let this opportunity slip, to put this obstruction to his ambition and once its thwarter out of the way.

CHAPTER IV.

CHATEAU DE NUIT.

In the midst of a dense forest, secluded and hidden by nature's screen, dark with the waring of time and the elements, in a location solemn and quiet and still not far distant from the center of three states, stood an old stone chateau. Situated near the boundary of three nations, it commanded a source for information of these states, France, the seat of war and its beginning, Germany, the hot-bed of opposition and Belgium, the final scene for Napoleon's great tragedy.

Surrounded by its moats and walls, protected by its turrets, it gave the appearance of a huge monument of the medieval times, times of the crusades. From its stately, frowning and scowling, dark exterior it took from the depths of tradition, the characteristic name of Chateau de Nuit, figuratively meaning the "Palace of Mystery." Here was Mario's favorite rendezvous,

this was the base of his operations, here his orders were given and here his information was learned, from his band of characters peculiarly like himself, silent, stern and quick of action. The band was formed of men of all nations. There were Swiss, driven into exile, French from hatred to Napoleon, Austrians from their love of daring and war, Germans to escape forced militarism only to take it up of their own free will and others, but all resolute and trained to action.

Chateau de Nuit seemed to be a place of mystery and enchantment, the lord of this place, who was of course Mario, had often been suspected of treason, and detachments had, with their own eyes seen spies enter this old building but upon searching it the place would be found vacant of any person but the old gray-haired butler, who admitted them. It could not be understood; but tales of ghostly weirdness were current among the peasant people and soldiers to the effect that at midnight, chains could be heard clanking in the corridors and the dungeons, shrieks of victims being murdered without pity, figures in white were said to have been seen to walk the ramparts, holding their arms to heaven as if imploring mercy. Then the tramp of

armed men, the clink of steel, the rasping of blades and then all would die off into silence, except when an owl would hoot in the distance or the clock in the dark ghostly tower would sound the time.

These manifestations were attributed to the crimes committed by the former lord of the chateau. As far as the traditions were concerned, there was some truth in many of the statements. No figures were seen to walk the walls, nor the clank of chains ever echoed through the rooms, but the clash of steel was not at all infrequent, neither the tramp of armed men.

Admittance few could gain, but one word and the door would be opened, but without that word they would, like the ponderous jaws of some sleeping beast, remain closed. There were five secret under-ground passways from the Chateau, the walls were all hollow with secret doors that would defy the ax or hammer, but would open with no noise and easily, let the right spring be touched. The rooms were of massive dimensions, high rough ceilings, floors well carpeted and finely furnished. On the walls hung massive paintings, usually of some noble ancestor.

In the corners, like mute sentries stood full suits of armor straight and erect, with closed visors and sword and spear in hand. The least noise would set these spectral sentries whispering throughout the rooms and all in general had such a wierd aspect that it cast a clammy cold fear of mystery over all.

It stood on a hill solemn, black, looking over the surrounding country. Spies were often traced to this place, but once the doors had opened their ponderous jaws and admitted them into the chateau's mysterious gloom, they would disappear as if the earth had opened and swallowed them from sight. On the wainscoating at one side of the room in which the climax of our tale will be played, on a high wooden panel were dull red spots which time had almost obliterated.

If one would ask the butler of their origin, he would shake his head and say: "Monsieur, it was before my time, they were when I came, but the story has been handed down, that many years before while the lord of the chateau, in the midst of an assembly of banqueting guests on his wedding night, had, midst the silence of the assembly raised on high his

goblet of blood red wine, to offer a toast. Ere he had uttered a word there was a shriek and a bat had dashed out its life against the glittering goblet and its contents dyed the bridal robe of his bride with the blood red wine. That night, after the guests had left, still thinking of the omen, a masked man entered the deserted banquet hall and hand to hand he fought with the lord. Long and fiercely they fought, the lord slowly edging toward the wall, towards the secret panel which if he could reach, one touch of the spring would put him safely out of his opponent's reach. But the sword sheathed itself in his breast just as he reached the coveted spot and his blood dyed the wall."

Here was Mario's headquarters, from here he operated. Fleur de Lis would often come to see him here, on important matters from the king and also to tell him of her love and devotion; the first receiving his immediate attention the last seemingly his disdain.

CHAPTER V.

THE RED SILK LADDER.

Dusk was slowly settling about the somber brow of Chateau de Nuit. The sun had already set and twilight was sinking slowly into deeper shadows over the world. In the great banquet hall of the Chateau, sat Fleur de Lis, idly dreaming and musing what work was again before her; but she knew not how to begin as Mario had not yet returned to direct her movements. Suddenly she was awakened from her musings by the clatter of hoofs on the stones in the court-yard beneath. She saw through the gloom a rider, hastily dismount and hurriedly enter the building. She heard footsteps, anxiously coming up the stairs and soon a knock sounded on the door and Francois entered and threw himself breathlessly in a chair to regain his composure. Fleur de Lis arose excitedly from where she sat, for she saw something was wrong and asked "what

brings you here in such haste François? Is the king ill or dead?"

"Neither. Mario is taken, all is lost."

"Mario taken?" she cried, "it cannot be true, he is too shrewd to let such bunglers as those Frenchmen catch him."

"It is true, he is now a captive in Paris and the whole city is rejoicing. There is no time to lose, they will either hang or shoot him soon. We must release him in some way."

"But how?"

"I am at a loss to know. Plan after plan has been passing through my mind on my way here, but none seemed plausible or capable of freeing him. He is strongly guarded and manacled. That makes the task all the harder," and he paced the length of the room impatiently.

Lily sat in quiet, a look of hate playing over her white temples and her forehead was contracted into a deeper frown. Her clenched hand lay upon the table, showing with what resolution she planned to accomplish the end which was revolving in her mind, how to gain Mario's release. Suddenly she looked up.

"Where is he confined?"

"In the outskirts of Paris, in a chateau lately converted into a prison."

"Do you know the place?"

"Very well, I passed it on my way here and as I went by a crowd of gossiping soldiers, who now and then made gestures towards a narrow window on the third floor I learned the exact place where he is held."

"Is there a guard about the place?"

"There are five sentries who continually pace the wall around the building. There is the detail at the entrance one at every corner and one at the door of Mario's cell. These are relieved every hour. It seems impossible to get him out."

"Nothing is impossible. We will try. I have a plan. Call up the Swiss he is here is he not?"

"Yes I saw him as I entered. I will have him here directly," and he hurriedly left the room while Lily again resumed her musings.

Soon François returned followed by a great powerful fellow, full six feet and as straight as a young sapling. He was a Swiss and emigrating from his native country, he entered France during these stormy times and had allied himself

with Mario's little band of spies. As he entered he made an awkward bow to Lily and remained standing before her, waiting to hear what she wanted with him.

"Andreas, can you shoot an arrow?"

"Mademoiselle am I a Swiss or not? Every Swiss can shoot an arrow, it is a characteristic of our nation, it is learned from childhood."

"Are you sure of your aim?"

"As sure as Tell was."

"You are conceited my man, but I only hope that your boasting is true. At least we will give you a trial of your skill. But have you a bow?"

"Yes Mademoiselle one with which I amuse myself at leisure moments to recall days when I was at home."

"Is it a toy?"

"If toys will kill at a hundred paces, then it is such."

"Well we will not stretch the bow to such a trial as that, the arrow will go less than that distance. Go bring it with a bunch of arrows and order four horses, for soon we will give a test to your skill."

The man left wondering as he went what his task would be, but he obeyed and soon returned

bearing his bow and a bunch of arrows. After he had left to fulfill Fleur de Lis' orders, François turned to her: "of what use can this man be to us with his arrows? They are out of date."

"I shall tell you later" and she went to a side panel, pressed a spring and the wall opened, revealing a beautiful inlaid casket. From this she took a long light silk ladder, a small round file and some silk thread. Then she seated herself at the table and on a small piece of paper wrote a few lines. By this time the Swiss had returned and she said: "now on to Paris at full speed."

François was full of curiosity to know the plan, but he knew it would not do to ask her. So he remained quiet. The Swiss followed dumb with curiosity, for to ask would do no good. They rode hard and in due time entered Paris. Darkness was just falling and with their faces muffled in their cloaks and as François had the pass-word they were admitted without any trouble. After awhile they arrived near the Chateau where Mario was confined and fastening their horses to a clump of trees on a vacant lot some distance away, they made ready to put Lily's plan into operation.

The night was very dark and a low muttering sounded in the west, announcing a coming storm. The prison loomed up dark and gloomy, only in a window in the third story was a light. The sentry was slowly pacing his beat about a hundred yards in length, at each end he would meet another sentry and after the challenge would pass over the same course again. All was quiet but for the tread of the sentry and now a distant clock struck ten. Three figures were behind a bush which grew on a vacant lot adjoining the prison.

"There where you see the light is his cell" said François. Lily then turned to the Swiss. "Andreas do you see that window with a light in it?"

"Yes."

"Can you shoot an arrow through it?"

"With ease Mademoiselle," said the crafty man measuring the distance with his eyes.

"Then take an arrow, tie this note to it with this silk cord and fire it through the window. But take care, do not miss, for the life of your lord depends upon your skill. The note reads, —there you need not strike a light I know it by memory."

"Mario: two more arrows will follow this one,

the first will bear a file in the bottom of its shaft, the second will bring you a silk cord, pull it up when you are ready to descend. When you receive the first arrow, darken the window for a second to let us know that you have received it safely. When the next comes do the same, then file the links of your manacles and the bars at your window. When you are ready for the third, again darken the window for a moment and we will fire it. Then when you are ready to descend extinguish the light. You must cross the wall as best you can, it is rough and you can easily climb it. Trust to the signal to find us. We are directly opposite your window. Signed, Fleur de Lis."

The note was carefully bound with a piece of silk cord and the archer, stepping aside so as not to have anything obstruct his aim, sprung the bow and waited for Lily to give the word when the guard was at the further end of his beat.

"Shoot sure and quick," came the word.

The archer stood for a moment immovable, but the bow bent slowly and steadily by his strong arm. Suddenly there was a sharp twang as the tension was released. The arrow sped forth with a hiss and all eyes were directed with

close attention to the window. Almost at the same time as the twang of the string, a shadow spread through the frame of light. Shortly after, the light in the window was darkened for an instant.

"He understands, now let's prepare the other arrow here is the file."

"The shaft was neatly hollowed out and the file placed in it and tightly bound by a silk cord. This was the hardest test of the Swiss's skill; but he never wavered and strung the arrow in his bow and prepared to fire. The sentry had just passed when Lily gave the word. The twang of the string sounded again and the arrow went whistling through the air with a clearly audible hum, and entered the window. The sentry stopped and looked about him, for he had heard the noise, but by this time the lightning began to play and the thunder rolled louder at regular intervals, so he soon dismissed all suspicion.

"There is the signal, he has it all right," cried François.

"Now we must wait for the signal for the third arrow, but the elements are going to war against us. It is good that the string is silk, it will not be heavy," said Lily. Large drops of rain be-

gan to fall and the group sought shelter under the nearby trees, where they still could command a view of the window.

Up in the cell, Mario had been sitting in a dejected mood. Plan after plan had been revolving through his mind how to escape. But his hands were chained or undoubtedly he would have put some of them to test. Fate seemed against him. That night the jailer had come, to tell him that the Emperor had signed his death warrant and he should be shot in the court-yard below at sunrise. Though hope was gone, despair never once showed on his face, he was too brave to wince and thanked the jailor for his kindness to inform him of the fact and not to keep him in ignorance of his fate until he faced the soldiers, which was often the case. Once he had taken up the pen intending to confess all and disclose his identity but then he threw it down and said, "I have not yet accomplished my task and rather than leave it unfinished I shall die unknown." Hardly had the words been spoken when a deep thud sounded in the room and in the panel of the strong oaken door opposite the window, he saw an arrow still quivering. With an exclamation of joy, he sprang to

the door and withdrew the shaft. "Ah! a note; I thought something would happen. Lily would not leave me here to die, if she could help it" and he read the note which we have heard before. An exclamation of joy burst from him and he darkened the window to let them know that he had received the note and understood how to act. Then he stepped aside to let the other arrow pass. After a short time it came and struck the door in exactly the same place. He then removed the file and set to work. The guard at the door never disturbed him and as the storm had now broken with all its fury, the file began to grate at the first link of his hand-cuffs with telling effect and in the course of an hour, the link was cut through and his hands were free to act. In less than another hour, an opening was made at the window, large enough to allow his body to pass through.

Outside, the watchers could see him earnestly at work, stopping long enough to let the guard pass out of sight, then the file would grate away with renewed vigor. Finally the light was darkened as the signal for the third arrow.

"He has filed the bars, now for the third arrow, all goes well," said Lily as she fastened the

silk thread to the end of the third shaft. They then approached almost under the wall and the bowman took his stand, the arrow on the string and his bow bent waiting for Lily's command.

"Shoot."

The arrow left the bow, dragging the silk cord after it like a tail. Suddenly the tightness of the silk loosened and the thread fell across the wall.

"It has reached all right" said the Swiss.

"Andreas, I fear not, the string is loose."

"Just so, it was tight until it struck, the force carrying more cord than is needed. That is why there is the slack. See I am right, there is the signal."

Then they felt a tug at the string and it began slowly to be pulled upwards. The silk ladder of flaming red was then attached to the end of the cord and was pulled up to the window where Mario was stationed. Then the light went out as the signal that he was ready to descend.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WRONG MAN.

The rain was now falling in torrents. Sharp flashes of lightning came and died at regular intervals, followed by loud burst of thunder. Up in the cell, when Mario had made everything in preparation and had pulled up the red silk ladder, he fastened it securely and barricaded the door so as to prevent any attack from that part. Then he pushed his body through the space his file had cleared and placed his foot on the first rung of the ladder. A sense of giddiness seized him, as he swung out into space. The rain dashed against his face and matted his hair, for he wore no hat. Then he began slowly to descend, his only hope was that the guard should not see him by the flashes of lightning, clinging to the sides of the building. In the shadow of the wall Fleur de Lis, François and the Swiss were watching in breathless suspense, the cling-

ing figure as he was shown to them by the lightning flashes, suspended between heaven and earth. The Swiss had an arrow strung, closely watching the guard.

"If the sentry sees him, shoot before he has time to challenge," said Lily in breathless anxiety.

Mario was about half way down when the guard suddenly stopped his walk and turned his face towards the building. Just then a sharp flash revealed Mario clinging to the ladder. The next moment the twang of a string was heard and the guard, without a cry tumbled into the courtyard, his sword clattering on the stones as he fell. Still Mario kept steadily descending and finally reached the ground; but now a new danger presented itself. The guard failing to challenge at the end of his beat, created suspicion in the mind of the other sentry, who started out to find the reason of the non-appearance of his comrade. Mario had now crossed the courtyard and having heard the guard fall on the stones, guessed the reason and thought the coast clear and immediately scaled the rough wall. Just as he reached the top he came face to face with the other sentry. So close were they and

so taken by surprise that for a moment, both stood immovable. Mario was first to act, he was unarmed but immediately his hands caught the man's arms and pinned them to his sides before he could reach his sword. A struggle ensued.

Hand to hand they fought, neither gaining a point. Mario's companions stood silently watching the conflict, by the almost constant flashes of lightning but were unable to lend any assistance to their imperiled master. Finally Mario was slowly sliding his hand along the other's arm. Now he reached the elbow, but still the hand steadily moved upward, until with a sudden lurch it reached the shoulder. Then with a quick spring his hand clasped the sentry's throat. Tighter and tighter became his grip until the veins in the neck stood out like whip cords. Weaker and weaker the man became, his struggling ceased, his face was black, his tongue protruded, his body relaxed, the eyes were fixed, bulging from his head, then the lifeless form sank to the wall with the death rattle in his throat. With a mocking laugh Mario heaved a sigh of relief and removing the hat and cloak, he put them on, then stepping over the prostrate

body he began to descend on the other side of the wall to join his companions. After Mario had reached the other side of the wall, he stopped for a moment. A hand from the darkness took his and led him to a clump of bushes, where his liberators were waiting for him. Then they mounted hurriedly and started, for there was no time to be lost as it would only be a short time until his escape would be discovered and the gendarmes would be in full chase. The rain was still falling but the lightning and thunder had subsided. Onward they urged their horses, along the muddy streets. Suddenly there sounded behind them the clatter of horses' hoofs in hot pursuit. They were the gendarmes, coming sooner than expected.

"Faster faster," shouted Mario and the rowles of his spurs dug deeper into his laboring horse's flanks. The sound in the distance grew nearer and nearer and the gendarmes were fast gaining upon them. Fleur de Lis was riding gracefully, urging her horse with word and whip. The Swiss coolly drew his weapon in preparation for the meeting. Every now and then Mario would cry to them to follow him with greater speed. Suddenly, without warning, François' horse

stumbled, fell to his knees, rolled over and was unable to rise. Mario seeing his distress, drew rein and turned back to assist him.

"Leave me my lord; leave me or they will capture you."

Every moment brought the gendarmes closer. It was too late. They were upon them. There was clanking of swords, cries of pain and curses. But an awful mistake was being made. Having seen the man fall from his horse and the others turn back, they felt certain that it was Mario who had been unseated, for they felt that this dare-devil would not stop to save another man's life at the risk of his own and so they paid but little attention to the man who was playing so much havoc about them, in endeavoring to capture the unseated rider. Mario and the rest of the band, seeing that all hope for François was cut off, fought their way through the circle and dashed away at full speed. The gendarmes paid little attention to them, but directed all their energy in capturing François, who struggled gracefully, drawing with his arm his cloak, more and more about his face so that they would not recognize him, in order to give Mario time to get a greater distance between them. His

plan was succeeding admirably and at last he surrendered. He was blindfolded in the darkness and still holding his cloak about his face, he was mounted on a horse and guarded by the gendarmes, was conveyed toward the chateau. As they reached the court-yard it was almost day.

They forced him to dismount, led him to the rear of the building and forced him to stand and wait their further pleasure. Never once did they doubt that they did have the mysterious man in the red cloak.

In silence, save for the echo of the foot-steps of the sentry set to watch him, François stood waiting for the time to disclose himself; only when he was certain that all capture of Mario was out of the question. In the distance after a short time, he heard the regular step of a squad of soldiers approaching him. He heard the dull thud of a pick at work. But never once did he realize that he was playing his game too far. Then he heard the order of a captain, he heard the click of musketry, he straightened up and the realization of what was going on about him, suddenly flashed through his mind, but it was too late. There was another sharp order, there

was a terrible roar and François fell forward his breast pierced by many bullets.

A detail of three or four men were left to place his remains in the grave that had been dug for them. As they drew the cloak from the man's face, there was an awful expression of horror and terror depicted in the features now becoming cold and rigid. With a cry they sprang back. It was the wrong man.

CHAPTER VII.

“THEN SIRE I DISOBEY.”

Paris was in a state of excitement at the announcement of Mario's escape. The Emperor's followers were sullen and fearful. The Bourbons received the news in joyous silence. In the few days that followed, the news of Mario's escape was felt and confirmed more strongly by this character's actions and achievements. This mysterious dare-devil was working harder than ever before. He would make his appearance it seemed, at places where he was least expected, striking here and there but, always single-handed. He was a valuable tool in the hands of the king and the allied forces. Not a bit of information ever escaped him. He would enter an enemy's camp, converse with the soldiers, plan with the generals, but always to his own advantage. The name of Mario was better known. It was feared from the lowest private

to the Emperor himself. If ever a messenger was found dead, the name of Mario and the sight of the man in the red cloak, with his devilish grinning face would flash through every mind. If a courier was so fortunate as to return, after having met him, all that he could say, was that his orders were gone and that the man in the red cloak had taken them. He would enter a camp at day-break, disguised of course, stay all day, gain information, leave late at night by some sleeping sentry's post, and then to make him sleep sounder, the sentry would be found the next morning with a dagger in his breast with a dainty red bow tied to the hilt. The bow of ribbon, always red, answered all questions and left no doubt as to who had committed the deed.

A reward had been placed upon his head but every one smiled at the idea of taking this dare-devil and no one cared to measure swords with him because they said, that his sword could always reach just twice as far as theirs. So a few days passed. It was now the last days of May and Napoleon was fast losing his prestige. The coalition consisting of England, Austria, Prussia and Sweden as we have said before, was formed,

and so far had been very successful. Wellington was at the head of the forces and the king had retired to Ghent to await results. Mario was at the Chateau de Nuit, while Lily went to the King's hiding place. It was now evident that there would be a battle which would soon settle all strife, for both sides were now massing their forces, by marching into Belgium. General Grouchy had been detached with about thirty-four thousand men to detain Blücher and both Generals were now near Chateau de Nuit, closely watching each other's actions. Then a week in June wore away and orders were given to Grouchy to detain Blücher, then defeat him in battle, then to join Napoleon, who was now near Waterloo.

One evening the King was sitting in a room of the chateau. He was musing, idly drumming on the arm of his chair, lost in a dream, absently looking through the open door, through which the rays of the setting sun were streaming. Silently he sat for some time and dusk was slowly falling. Suddenly, the silhouette of a woman was seen, outlined against the rosy sky. It was Fleur de Lis. Her face was flushed and excitement was plainly written on her features.

Bowing to the King she said: "Sire, I have news."

"From Wellington?" he asked looking towards her.

"Yes and he says, that we must act quickly. Napoleon is now near Waterloo and a clash is inevitable. General Grouchy has been detached to keep Blücher in check. Wellington desires that by some means, Grouchy must be detained, so as to let Blücher join him."

"But how shall this be accomplished, we have but little time and Grouchy may be marching now? Perhaps by false orders?"

"That may do. But at any rate Mario must know and at once. There is no time to be lost; he must understand Wellington's orders."

"But there is no one to carry the order, François is not here. We must wait for him to return."

"Sire François will never come."

"What do you mean?"

"He was killed at Paris, because he was mistaken for Mario."

"Poor fellow! Do you know Fleur de Lis, that he was a brave man, a good friend, a good companion, and there were none better or more loyal in serving his king. I regret this very

much; but such is the fate of one who follows the wars" said the King, and he again resumed the revery he had been in before Fleur de Lis came, and a large tear was brushed from his eye.

"But Sire we must act, and at once" said Fleur de Lis disturbing the silence.

"I know not what to do; I have none here that I can trust with the order, it will have to wait."

"To wait may cost you your throne, we must act, or all may be lost, there is but one who can carry that order."

"Who?"

"Louis the Eighteenth must carry that order or sacrifice his throne."

"I? Lily you are mad."

"I may be Sire, but that is all that will save your throne, for if Grouchy joins Napoleon all will be lost. Sire will you go?"

"No. I shall trust to fate."

"Fate seldom favors cowards. Sire will you go?"

"No; I shall wait, life is more precious than a kingdom. I would rather lose."

"No, Sire you shall not lose. I will deliver the order."

"You shall not."

"Your success demands it. I will go."

"You shall not, I command you."

"Then Sire, I disobey," and she disappeared through the door. Soon a clatter of hoofs was heard and Louis nervously paced the floor, every now and then approaching the window. Lily rode hard and in due time, just as dusk was settling about the forest, she came in sight of the chateau. She knew that the place was guarded, so she decided to take the tunnel. Her horse was now covered with foam; the night was growing dark and she cautiously rode up to the entrance of the tunnel.

Although he was in ignorance of the fact, a guard was standing not more than a few yards from its entrance. Lily had advanced and seeing the danger turned and started in the opposite direction, urging on the tired beast. The guard challenged and seeing the figure flee, leveled his gun and fired, but Lily went on untouched. She now tried the next, but advanced more cautiously this time but met with the same result, only a little closer call, for the ball passed through the rim of her hat. There was no use to try the tunnels, there was a guard at every fifty yards, so she withdrew a distance to think of some plan.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WARNING IN TIME.

In the window of the banquet hall she could see a light burning and felt that Mario was there. She also wondered if he knew how closely his chateau was guarded, for already Grouchy began to suspect that the Lord of Chateau de Nuit and Mario were one and the same person. She knew that he must be warned and also that he must have the order, so she decided upon a bold stroke. She would make a dash for the main gate of the court-yard and try to surprise the guard. Once within the enclosure she would be safe, for the danger lay in passing the line. So she slowly cantered about the building until on a direct line with the gate. Then she dismounted and took off her outer skirt and tore it into four pieces. Then she tore up some grass and filled each piece of cloth and bound one on each of the horse's hoofs. Then she took her

pistol in hand and sent the tired beast forward with a bound. The horse made little noise with his muffled hoofs and she rode furiously. When about two hundred yards from the gate she unexpectedly ran aside of two guards, who had been carrying on a conversation. Like an arrow she was past them, but they had heard her coming for she was so close to them. They did not wait to challenge, but fired at the disappearing figure. Lily leaned forward in the saddle, over the horse's neck and the first ball sped wide its mark, but the next struck above the temple, just grazing the skull and leaving a furrow in the flesh, from which the blood flowed furiously.

She reeled in the saddle for a moment but still remained conscious, slightly benumbed by the blow. Still she rode on. There was a numbness about her head and a sense of giddiness overcame her mind but she remained seated, brushing away with her arm the blood which blinded her. After a few moments she reached the court-yard and dismounting she set the horse free. At the door the old gray haired man met her but she brushed him aside and mounted the stairs. Her head was whirling and she staggered on, the wound in her head bleeding furi-

ously, covering her face. Mario was sitting in a chair in a state of study. As he heard her enter he raised his head. Lily staggered to the table for support. Her lips had lost their color and her voice was weak.

"Mario the chateau is guarded on all sides, be careful," she was reeling and she wiped away the blood from her eyes.

"I come from the King and bring orders from Wellington. Grouchy, Grouchy," her voice was choked and her hand trembled with weakness. "Grouchy you must detain—," and before he could reach her she fell heavily to the floor. Mario and the old man rushed to her. "Gaston call one of the monks." The man obeyed and descended the steps. "She is a true good girl and could I love—." Mario murmured; but the old man entering with the priest, cut short his musings.

"Take care of her, my Father. Remove her to a secret chamber, she is wounded in the head, spare no care to restore her as speedily as you can." Mario and the priest then carried her to the secret chamber, lighted by the old tottering man.

The next day was the 14th of June and it

wore itself away and night set in with a drenching rain and high wind, that whistled and moaned in the tree tops, driving dark banks of clouds from the west, giving promise of a wild night of thunder storm. For days both Grouchy's forces and those of Blücher lay quietly, only now and then a skirmish or a picket shot at his post by some sharp-shooter.

One cannot tell what the dice of fate will decide. Misfortune's strokes are sharp and give no warning, they are like lightning, first blind the victim then strike, leaving only blackened hopes. Some people are doomed to misfortune and always follow its dictations. One of this class was General Grouchy and just at this period, he was singled out, to make the mistake which has changed the fate of the world and will be talked about for ages and ages.

He decided upon a bold stroke. That night he had intended to attack Chateau de Nuit, take its lord, whom he suspected to be Mario, then he would return late that same night and attack Blücher. Then when he had defeated him in battle, he would march on and join Napoleon, who was now near Waterloo, where it was but a question of a short time when a conflict would take place.

With a detachment of fifty cavalrymen, he set out wrapped deep in his cloak to ward off the drenching rain. It was just the kind of night to make his secret arrest and then his bold attack, but fortune also had a hand in the game. They struck an easy canter, it being very hard for the horses to make much headway over the soggy ground. The rain had died down into a steady drizzle, but the clouds growing darker on the horizon and an occasional mutter of thunder, gave the assurance that nature promised a war of the elements.

He reached and entered the court-yard with a rush. He dismounted and knocked heavily on the strong wooden door. A voice within called out: "Who is there?"

"Open and you shall see" cried Grouchy in harsh tones not enjoying the rush of the wind and hoping to take the place by surprise, rather than by force. The door slowly swung open and an old gray haired man, stood holding a flaming torch high in air.

"Is your Lord here?"

"No Monsieur, he has gone on to Paris."

"Come that lie may cost you your head. Reveal his whereabouts or you are lost."

"I am telling the truth," said the old man very firmly.

"What proof can you give?"

"Search," said the old man.

"These chateaux often have secret hiding places, but should he be found in the building, that lie will be your condemnation. Your old withering body shall grace the boughs of some old oak out yonder," said Grouchy as he began to search.

The General watched him closely as his men began to search the building, but the old gray haired man still retained that same firmness, which seemed to make him half believe, that the old man told the truth. Search where they would, no one could they find in the building, but the old man who admitted them, and he looked on in silence as doors were torn open and the house ransacked in general.

Grouchy was baffled. He knew not what to do. Finally he concluded to remain an hour or so, as he thought that possibly the spy might return in the meantime and as he did not care to encounter the storm, which would soon burst in all its fury. He had an abundance of time, for he would not attack Blücher until midnight,

so he thought that he might as well spend the time in a comfortable place and enjoy a good meal.

His men were made comfortable in the basement, while he mounted the steps to the hall on the second floor and ordered the old man to bring a supper and build a fire in the huge fireplace, in order to dry his wet clothes. This the old man did, bringing him a good meal and setting a flask of wine on the table, he left without a word. Then he sat at the table and ate and drank, never once giving it a thought, that the wine might be drugged. He could hear his men down below, bumping their glasses, praising the wine of the Lord of Chateau de Nuit and crying loudly for more. He finished his meal and pulling a great arm chair before the hearth, sat smoking a cigarette and gazing about him.

The room of massive dimensions, was but illy lighted by a candelabrum on the table and the fire-light in the grate cast fitful figures on the high and rough looking ceiling. On the walls hung massive paintings of soldiers, probably ancestors of some of the lords of the chateau. The room had an uncanny wierd appearance, but to a soldier these things appear for a moment,

only for a moment and then pass away. How slowly an hour passed. He looked at his watch and saw that it was nearly half past nine. By midnight he meant to have Blücher defeated and then be on his way to Napoleon. Drawing a chair to the table, which had been cleared by the old man, with pen and paper he began to plan his movements against Blücher and soon became so interested in his work that he began to murmur aloud as he planned.

Slowly he began to become drowsy and to arouse himself, he began to pace the floor. Often, he would stop and be aroused from his reveries, by what seemed to be the penetrating gaze of a pair of sharp eyes. His drowsiness steadily increased and soon he became so sleepy, that he fell in the chair, still standing before the hearth, over which hung a huge picture of some noble ancestor. Soon he fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

VICTORY AND DEATH.

Only a few moments seemed to have passed, when he was suddenly awakened by the clock in the tower striking eleven. The drowsiness had not completely left him. He stretched and yawning said: "I must go, or by midnight Blücher will be on his way to Wellington," and he started to arise.

"Do not go yet," said a stern voice as slowly the great picture over the fire-place swung back. A strong well-built cavalier, stood behind in a niche in the wall which led to a secret passage-way. Grouchy rubbed his eyes and tried to convince himself that he was only dreaming, and that perhaps the drug in the wine had forced the delirium. He reached for his weapon, but before eating, he had lain aside all his arms on the table, many feet away. The man stood like a statue, his head erect, his eyes sparkling and a

malicious smile playing about his lips. At his side he wore his sword, which clanked loudly as he climbed from the niche in the wall, never once removing his eyes from those of the General, pushing the picture back into place as he did so.

It was Mario.

The General was dumbfounded. He could not move. With what grace Mario seated himself in a chair near the General. The malicious smile never left his face, but seemed to mock his captive in his misery. At last the General found his speech.

"I have come to arrest you sir."

"On what grounds?"

"That you are a spy."

Mario only smiled. "But before going away to captivity and death, let us have a little conversation."

The General did not dare to move for Mario's hand touched his sword at the least stir he made. Thus they sat talking, while time rolled on, and Grouchy upon whom Napoleon's fate rested was utterly helpless. Mario seemed to delight in

his misery, for he watched his anxiety with pleasure. The rain began to swish against the windows and loud bursts of thunder vibrated through the great hall, while flashes of lightning seemed to cleave the heaven's breast and make the world as light as day for an instant.

"Napoleon and Wellington will soon meet who will be the victor?" Mario tauntingly asked.

"Napoleon" said the General sullenly.

"Were you not to attack Blücher and then join Napoleon?"

"I intend to attack him tonight."

"You have not much time. He leaves to join Wellington at midnight."

Things were getting desperate, great drops of sweat stood on the General's forehead. Something must be done he thought. Already the clock was striking the quarter before twelve. The storm still raged in unabated fury and flashes of lightning came and died at regular intervals. Grouchy could bear it no longer. He arose suddenly and Mario did likewise and facing the General began:

"There is but one way. You have me in your power and I have you in mine. I am a spy in

the hands of Wellington and the King. Your men are drugged on the floor below and of the same wine you drank, but not as much as they. Come" said he never once removing his glance, "to this balcony."

The General obeyed him and stepped out into the cool air, hoping that by surprise he might strangle Mario; but he had probably foreseen this for he kept the General at a sword's distance. The rain drove against their faces and the thunder rolled with a deafening noise, that shook the whole building. A clear piercing note of a bugle sounded in the distance and just then the heavens opened with a glaring light and revealed a line of struggling cavalry and cannon, laboring through the mud and rain.

Mario stood with his hand out-stretched, pointing to the struggling mass which the lightning had shown the amazed General. That same ghastly smile played across his features and his eyes glittered with a malicious light. Grouchy was desperate. He felt that there might still be time enough for him to reach his camp and overtake Blücher. Suddenly Mario turned to him and said: "I will give you one chance. By midnight the last soldier will have left

Blücher's camp. You still have time enough to overtake him. Come, we, will fight the battle which shall decide the fate of nations."

He took from the wall an old pair of rapiers that showed a stain of blood. He gave the choice and Grouchy selected.

"Come," said the General "on guard."

Mario did not seem to be in a hurry, but slowly raised his rapier, letting the blade slide through his hand until it bent in an arch above his head, never once removing his eyes from those of the General, he suddenly loosed the blade, which released from its tension hissed through the air and struck the guard with a ringing click. The wind moaned dolefully around the old building, loud peals of thunder rolled along the heavens and the lightning seemed to play on their blades as they slid along each other with a rasping sound. Now Mario thrusts and the General parries; now the General lunges and Mario guards: but neither gains a point. Mario was fighting for time, while Grouchy was battling with despair to save his commander from defeat. Time went on; slowly but surely Mario was forcing him step by step to the wall as they slowly circled around the

room. Nearer and nearer his blade came to the heart at every stroke. Mario was a master hand at the art and never did he show himself to better advantage. Never once did that smile leave his face or his eye lose its brightness. Their breath came hard and heavy, a loud peal of thunder died away in the distance, just as the clock in the tower tolled the hour of midnight. A low laugh broke from Mario and through his labored breathing he hissed "it is too late; Napoleon is defeated."

The General began to despair and felt that it would be better to throw aside his rapier and let him kill him, than to meet his disgrace. The fate of his commander depended on a stroke, and a bold one and he again took heart. But should that stroke fail, all would be lost. He watched and soon an opportunity presented itself, either Mario felt too certain that the affair would end in his favor, or now because he was so sure of Napoleon's defeat and that he had gained his point, he became reckless. With a quick rasping stroke the General sent Mario's rapier hissing across the room, and his blade sank deep in his heart. He released his hold on the rapier and Mario slowly tottered, swayed, staggered and

fell in a heap on the floor, the weapon still quivering in his breast.

Grouchy did not wait for his hat or cloak but started for the door with a bound. A figure barred his way. It was the old tottering, gray haired man and in his hand he held a long glittering knife. Mario now writhing in agony, raised himself on his elbow and turned his glassy eyes to the door and saw the old man raising the knife.

"Let him pass Gaston; let him pass. It is too late Napoleon has lost and I have won," and he again sank to the floor writhing in his blood. The old man reluctantly lowered the knife and stepped aside to let Grouchy pass.

Mario's life was fast ebbing and he called for a priest. Soon the old man returned with a monk who knelt beside the dying man. His speech was now broken and weak; but he still wore the smile of triumph.

"Father are you here, I cannot see. Come closer."

"I am right by your side, what is your wish? Shall we remove the rapier?"

"No, no, let it be, it ends a life of misery and trouble. My work is finished, now let me die in peace."

His eyes were glassy and his mind wandered. He was continually reaching with his trembling hand to his breast as if in search of something. His lips were pale and trembled as he spoke.

"Father in my doublet, near my heart, quick, quick I cannot live long."

The priest hastily opened the doublet and saw hanging to a golden chain a locket which was now covered with blood. This he removed from the dying man's neck. Weaker and weaker Mario's voice became. Suddenly, he staggered to his feet. He seized the rapier which had fallen from his hand, and assuming a position for attack, his eyes flashing, he began to lunge and parry and retreat, staggering with weakness. "Come on, come on, I'll fight you now to the end, here's where I gain my victory of vengeance or I die without it. Go back to her Napoleon, go back to her defeated, disgraced, dishonored. You have won in one battle, you have gained the spoils of one victory, but I now have mine. Come on" he shouted, "come on, our score is almost settled. Go back to her and tell her that you have lost; you have lost to me, to me the—" he tottered, struggled to raise from his knees on which he had fallen, but death was

conquering him and he fell to the floor. Then he raised his head, a calmness had come over him and the film was already on his eye.

“Take that my Father, just as it is to the Empress Maria Louisa. You are a monk, you will gain admittance. Tell her that I the count—” A shudder passed over his body his eyes became fixed and Mario was dead, without giving his name to the listening monk, but he knew his commission.

CHAPTER X.

A MYSTERY REVEALED.

Some time after a monk called upon the de-throned Empress and asked for an audience. This was gained and he entered a room finely furnished and a woman approached him and bowed low.

"What do you desire, my good Father?"

"My lady, I come with a strange message and my duty is indeed hard for me to bear. But I never fail to fulfill a dying man's last request."

"A dying man? But who can he be?"

"A character strange and mysterious and although I have been with him for some time, he has seemed to me more of fanciful or supernatural creation."

"But his name?"

"I knew him by many. Mario."

"Mario?"

"Yes my lady, the man in the red cloak."

"But what does this concern me?"

"He sends a message."

"To me?"

"Yes to you and desired me to give unto you this locket, which was about his neck and is dyed with his blood, which he shed for the King, but I should judge more for revenge."

The woman took the locket. It was covered with stains of blood, which the monk had not erased. It was beautifully set with diamonds and rubies. She idly, as in a dream turned it over and over in her hands. She then opened it and staggered to a chair for support an exclamation breaking from her lips, "Eugene." After awhile she regained her self-possession.

"But how did he die my Father?"

"By the sword."

"At whose hands?"

"General Grouchy's of Napoleon's army."

"He is a traitor. He failed to appear."

"He failed to appear Madame, but he is no traitor; he was detained."

"By Mario?"

"Yes."

"My Father I am about to tell you a story, which I trust you shall never breathe to another

living being. You are in mystery and doubt as to who this strange man was. As you will remember when I was a princess at the court of Austria, my hand was sought by Napoleon. I accepted his suit and joined my life with his and ascended the throne of France, as Empress. Several years before this, while yet but a young girl, I was riding one day in a coach through the streets of Vienna. The people on all sides were bowing and cheering me, for I was a favorite. Suddenly, the horses took fright and started to run at a terrific speed. The carriage swayed from side to side and the spectators stood by dumbfounded, unable to lend assistance. The coachman was hurled from the box and died beneath the wheels. Onward the maddened team rushed. I was told that a certain nobleman, the Count Eugene—was riding on horse back followed by his courtiers, when he came upon the crowds of terrified citizens. From several he gained the information, that the Princess Maria Louisa was being drawn to death and destruction by a pair of maddened horses. Waiting to hear no more he dashed the rowels in the horse's flanks and at break neck speed pursued the fleeing team. Then began a race of

life and death. Onward we rushed for quite a distance, but the count was fast gaining upon the team. A few moments after I heard the clatter of hoofs in hot pursuit and then I fainted and knew no more. I was told afterward, how urging his noble beast forward he had gained so closely upon the team, that but a few strides more and he would reach the reins. The foam was flowing from his horse's flanks, its nostrils were dilated, its eyes bulging, but he forced him onward, until he reached one of the horses' bridles then, leaning over he seized it by the bit and just as his horse sank to the ground, bleeding from its nostrils and mouth, he conquered the maddened team and thus saved my life.

A short time after that I met my rescuer at a court ball. Immediately a love affair sprang up between us and we were secretly betrothed. Then came Napoleon and offered his hand. I refused the count and accepted Napoleon's offer. Some time after that the Count Eugene disappeared and no one knew where he had gone. This, my Father, has been a revelation to me, although many and many a time has suspicion lurked in my mind, that this strange, mysterious

man in the red cloak might be my former betrothed. Go now, my Father, let this be a secret between thee and me, let no one know of this. Here is a goodly sum to reward you. Bowing low, he kissed Madame's hand. Her head was turned away, suppressed sobs broke the silence in the room and he withdrew.

At last the moment came and the battle which decided the fate of the world was begun. The night before the battle of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington was in the midst of the gayety and splendor of a grand ball, given in his honor by the Duchess of Richmond. Lightly the dancers swayed in perfect rythm to the strains of sweet music. Newly made sweethearts hung on the soldier lover's arm. Glances were exchanged and love words were spoken, little knowing that perhaps they might be their last. Suddenly, above the laughter and gayety of this grand splendor, there burst upon their ears a loud, deep sound. For a moment all paused and then suspicions were again cast to the winds. But there it was again, there was no doubting this time, "It is, it is the cannon's opening roar"

came the whispered words from every mouth. Officers and soldiers bid hasty farewells, many of them their last and dashed to the front. Charge after charge was made and repulse after repulse was given. Blow after blow was dealt and received, as the day wore itself away. All day long they battled. There were volleys of musketry, there was booming of cannon, there were riderless horses dashing hither and thither, only a few drops of crimson on the saddle to tell the tale. There were groans on every side. There were men, rambling in unconsciousness, seeing in their dreams their homes in France, their loved ones about them, their sweethearts, their wives, the prattling children, as the scenes of quiet and peace arose in a mist before their eyes on this turbulent battlefield. Day wore itself slowly away. Wellington looked and longed for night and Blücher, while Napoleon sent messenger after messenger to recall Grouchy to his aid, but in vain. That General, that Emperor, that Conqueror, stood on the field with folded arms, a frown on his face, viewing the awful carnage before him, seeing victory within his grasp, if that one man would only come. Fate, it seemed, had played against him this day.

Just as dusk, as if ashamed of her day's work of destruction, was slowly spreading the folds of her inky mantle over "the dead and dying in one red burial blent," Napoleon made one more effort. He drew that old guard, which had served him so faithfully and well in days gone by, into one solid phalanx and addressed them in tones of determination and pathos. He drew for them pictures, where they could see themselves fighting an enemy which they had conquered years before. Then he gave the order to charge. That grand and noble line of soldiers, who had followed him from victory to victory and had lost with him at Moscow, made their last charge.

Up to the muzzles of the guns the exhausted men staggered, some tottering and falling beneath the shower of bullets, before they reached the line. Again and again they charged and again and again they were repulsed. Officer after officer was shot down and at last all seemed lost. No one was there to lead. The soldiers began to fall back, awful holes were made in the line, when suddenly a figure sprang forward, seized the standard and rushed into the thickest of the fight, shouting for them to follow. It

was the Captain Pierre Moran. For a moment everything seemed to vanish before them. Volley after volley rang out. Pierre staggered and tottered, but onward he led his few followers. Another volley and he fell, bleeding from wounds in his breast and head, the colors which had seen so many victories completely covering him in their folds. Heavy cannonading was heard. "It is Grouchy" cried the French with joy. It was Blücher. The soldiers were as if struck dumb. The lines swayed for an instant, tottered, then broke and fled. It was all over the die had been cast, and Napoleon had lost, and all because Grouchy failed to appear.

CHAPTER XI.

IN MORTE QUIETUS EST.

Day was slowly waning and the tired sun was slowly sinking to rest. Fleecy clouds near the horizon were tinged with rose. Chateau de Nuit stood black and solemn, as if mourning for its dead master. Up in the banquet room he lay in his coffin of black, draped with fiery silk. Its folds falling loosely to the floor in solemn grandeur. He was dressed in the garb of a cavalier, of red, all red and the cloak of the same color, was carefully draped about him, with its flaming elegance drooping in folds as he was wont to wear it in life. Even in death his face still held his last smile of contented victory.

The high rough walls looked upon the dead with solemn silence. No more would the echoes awaken to his footfalls and out of respect for their absent lord, it seemed they held a deep silence, as if they had forgotten all else but the

reverence due their silent master. At his head and feet stood two soldiers, in full armor, their visors closed, and immovable as statues.

Dusk had almost lengthened its shadows into the silent gloom of night when the clatter of horses' hoofs sounded in the court-yard below. Two figures mounted the stairs and at the door, they uncovered, before entering the chamber of the dead. They were Wellington and the King. Slowly they approached the bier and stood in silence, gazing on the waxy features of the man to whom they owed their greatness. Thus they stood for some time, until they were interrupted by foot-steps. A figure entered the room, her hair loose, falling about her shoulders and temples with lustrous black curls. Her eye was wild and wandering. Above her temple on her pallid face gleamed a scar with a brilliant redness.

"Where is Mario? Why doesn't he come? Why doesn't he come?" and her articulation was broken, now with sobs and then with a peal of musical laughter. The King and Duke stood aside with bowed heads to let her pass. She seemed to take no notice of them, she sought only one person and him she could not find.

"Where is he? Do you not know? Where is Mario; can no one tell? He will come. He loves me. I know he will come. He will come," and she broke into a ringing laugh, which soon changed into sobbing.

"Do you not know me Fleur de Lis?" asked the King. She started as from a dream and looked up into his face with her sad searching eyes. "No! No! You are not Mario. You are not Mario," and she approached the bier. Suddenly she stopped and fixed her eyes upon the dead. A shriek broke from her lips and she threw herself upon the coffin, sobbing and laughing in turn. "I knew he would come. I knew he would not leave me," she murmured. "He is not dead. He is not dead. Mario! Mario!" and the echoes only made answer by repeating the name she had shrieked aloud. Then she arose, her eye wildly wandering, she slowly left the room.

A low chant swelled along the halls and a procession with solemn, swinging, steps and their heads cowed, six monks entered the room and stood by the coffin. Then the King advanced and unbuckled his sword, placed the jeweled hilt in the hands of the dead man and

withdrew a step or two. Then a deep muttering drum rolled loud and long, then at regular intervals. The monks took up the dead and with solemn and measured steps bore it from the room, followed by the guard of honor and the King and Wellington. A few men followed closely behind, amongst these was the old tottering gray haired man.

Slowly the procession pursued their walk to the court-yard and crossing the stone pavement, they came to the newly made grave. Slowly, amidst the rolling of the drum and the sobs of the followers, he was lowered into the grave. The King then approached and after a short prayer, ending with the words "in morte quietus est" and with a parting glance they left. In silence the King and the Duke rode for awhile, then the King spoke: "He was a strange man."

"Very. Who was he?"

"I do not know." Then darkness and silence closed around them.

In the outskirts of Paris, in the heart of a forest, stood an old nunnery. One could see the good sisters, moving about in the garden and

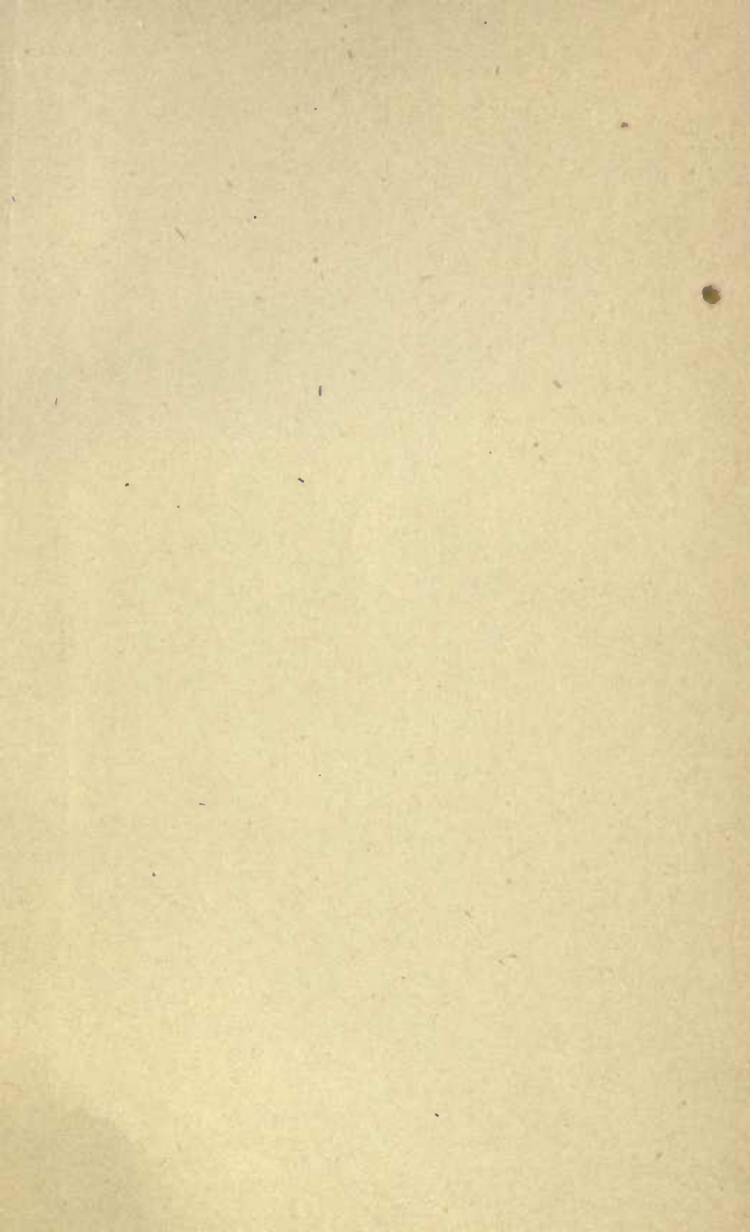
whenever the angelus sounded, one would single out in particular a maiden, beautiful, with down-cast glances, cross herself devoutly and count her beads. Could we draw nearer and hear her prayer we would be stirred by its pathos and melancholy. One day the Mother Superior found her in the shadow of the wall, seeking comfort from the rays of the mid-summer's sun and bending over her asked her, "sister why did you ever take our vows?" A tear-drop hung on her long lashes her breath came fast, for that question probably awoke dreams of past days. For a moment she remained in silence, a silence so deep one could hear the rippling of the distant brook and the call of a bird for its lost mate. Then she raised her eyes and turning towards her Mother Superior she said, "I will give you an answer which you might think strange but I will say only these few words then ask me no more. 'Love is but the prelude to marriage as the first act to a tragedy; shun the prelude and the play will cease.'"

This was all she said. Hiding her face in her hands she sobbed bitterly and again she broke the silence saying, "I am following the advice of a very dear friend, which was, 'place love

in the shackles of forgetfulness and let honor be your only shrine of worship.'” Without a word the Mother Superior withdrew, leaving her to dream and forget the days which brought pain and joy and thus we leave her with silence drawing her curtain about her feelings and her life.

For many years after when strangers passed near the Chateau de Nuit, a figure in white would stop them and looking into their faces would turn away with a look of disappointment and murmur: “No it is not Mario, but he will come, he will come.” Then an old gray haired man, leaning on a cane would tell them “she will not harm you; she is only mad.” At night a song would be heard from the dark walls of Chateau de Nuit, the air wild and sad, then the peasants would shake their heads and say, “it is the voice of night in song.”





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